NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second-class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *79-89 Seventh Ave., N. Y.*

No. 545 NEW YORK, JUNE 8, 1907. **Price, Five Cents**

THE MAYNARD WOMAN'S DOUBLE

—OR— PATSY'S TERRIFIC BRAIN STORM

By THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER"

"That's something to remember me by," Patsy said, exultingly. "That's part of the brain storm you gave me, you scoundrel, and it's only a left-over squall at that."

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THE MAYNARD WOMAN'S DOUBLE

OR,

Patsy's Terrific Brain Storm.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE CLEVEREST ESCAPE ON RECORD.

Joseph came softly into the room where the detective was seated and stood silently behind his chair until Nick Carter looked up to inquire what was wanted.

The time was evening, and the day, Sunday, and Joseph knew by experience that his master disliked to be disturbed at that hour of that day, unless the matter was one of particular importance.

"What is it, Joseph?" the detective asked mildly.

"It is Mr. Coogan, sir, from Boston. He has just arrived. His train was late, and——"

"What? Johnnie Coogan? Have him in at once, Joseph." And a moment later, while he grasped his friend cordially by the hand, he exclaimed: "This is an unexpected pleasure, John. I'm jolly glad to see you. The more so since I am entirely alone this evening. Help yourself to a cigar and sit down. Have you had your dinner, or supper, or whatever you call it in your town?"

"Yes. Had it on the train. How are you, Nick?"

"Never better, old chap. I'm always well, you know. It is one of the rules of my life to keep well. It was good of you to come straight to me from the train. You'll find this home of mine beats a hotel to a standstill."

Coogan was lighting his cigar and when he had completed that operation, he said:

"The fact is I came straight from Boston to you, Nick. That is I came purposely to see you."

"Better and better."

"Look here, Nick. Don't misunderstand me. It is business that brought me here to you to-day, not pleasure; although, of course, it is always a pleasure to see you."

"Business, eh, Johnnie? What sort of business?"

"Same old thing, Nick."

"Same old thing! I don't think I quite understand. The only business that you and I ever had together was the time you gave me such valuable assistance in that Maynard case."

"Exactly. That's it. You throw five aces first whop out of the box."

The detective stared at his friend for a moment; then he smiled.

"What's the matter with you, John?" he asked mildly.

"Been having more indigestion, and, consequently, bad dreams?"

Coogan laughed.

"I'm never without that," he said, "and I suppose one follows the other naturally. But this is no case of stomach trouble, although it does seem like a bad dream. It's about Lucile Maynard, I tell you—or Lucy Maynard, as she preferred to be called in Boston. It's about the woman who made herself up to represent Carlina Carroll and so murdered Merrill Gwynn——"

"Hold on, Johnnie. You needn't go into all that. My memory is quite fresh on all those points. But what has the Maynard woman to do with your presence here to-night?"

"She has 'flew de coop', that's all."

"Wha-at!"

"Fact."

"Escaped?"

"Just that."

"When? And how?"

"Well, supposedly, last Thursday afternoon. As to how it was done, she has a double who simply formed a habit of going to the prison to see her and was so very nice about it that she was finally permitted to sit in the cell with Lucile; and last Thursday—well, it was Lucile who walked out instead of the double; see?"

Nick nodded.

"Yes; I see," he said. "But where was the guard? People are not allowed to sit inside the cell of a murderer at all as a rule, although I believe it is sometimes relaxed in the case of a female prisoner, particularly when that prisoner happens to be beautiful. But even then the guard is supposed not to take his eyes from them for an instant, and also to remain close enough to hear everything that is said. Suppose you tell me all about it."

"That's what I'm here for."

"Go ahead then."

"Do you recall how long a time it is since you arrested Lucy Maynard, Nick?"

"Somewhere about six weeks, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"You know, of course, that she has got money to burn. Nobody pretends to know how much she is worth, but it is safe to say that it is way up among the six figures—and some say her fortune will touch the seventh."

"Do you mean that she bribed her way out of prison?"

"No. I don't mean that. I know—or rather I feel sure that she did not do that. But you know and I know that a discreet use of money can purchase a lot of favors inside prison walls that are not accorded to the rank and file, if I may use the term."

"Certainly."

"Well, it has all come out in the wash, since the escape, just how this was managed."

"Tell me the story."

"She had not been in prison but a few days when she began to use her money freely. She sent out for delicacies, and got them—at prison prices. Then she told one of the guards that she needed more money and that there was only one friend whom she would trust to get it for her. The result was that that particular friend was sent for—and came; and the payment of a price also procured the privilege of that friend's visiting the cell itself."

"Go on."

"After that she came every second or third day, and——"

"Wait a minute. Didn't Lucile engage legal counsel?"

"Certainly; but it's a cinch that they had nothing to do with the matter, and were as much flabbergasted as anybody when Lucile disappeared."

"All right. Go on."

"After that first call, the friend came every second or third day. Lucile was always willing to pay a good price to the guards for the visit, and she always did it; and the guard—there were three of them who took turns, you know—always remained within earshot and listened attentively to everything that was said between the two women."

"Well?"

"Remember that this began six weeks ago, almost. The visits averaged about four a week, so up to the time of the escape there had been something more than twenty calls made by that particular person, upon Lucile. Don't you see? She got to be a sort of regular thing at the prison. She always came at about the same hour of the day, and she had regular days, and the three guards got to managing it so that they could divide the profits of those calls about equally between them."

The detective nodded.

"Moreover, there was never an act or a word passed between the two women that was at all suspicious. The visitor never once passed any article to the prisoner——"

"You mean that she was never *seen* to do so."

"I mean what I say, *that she never did so*."

"All right. Have it that way; but go on."

"At every interview the two remained the width of the cell apart from each other, and always the guard stood within plain view of them, watching them."

"Wait a minute. Was the likeness between the two marked? Or rather, was it remarked upon in the prison?"

"I am coming to that. No, it was never remarked upon—for the reason that the visitor always wore one of those gauzy white veils through which you think you can see a woman's face quite plainly, while as a matter of fact you don't see her at all. You know the kind I mean?"

"Perfectly well."

"If one is worn properly and adjusted in the right

manner, it will make a homely woman appear beautiful—and all the while you believe that you see her quite plainly."

"Yes. Go on."

"The cell occupied by Lucile was—is considerably larger than the regular cells. It is called the Star cell, and is at the disposal of anybody who can afford to pay for it. The cot is somewhat wider and softer than the others. There is also a rug on the floor and a mirror against the wall."

"Against which wall?"

"I was coming to that; against the wall away from the door, so that a person standing at the mirror has her back directly toward the cell door."

"I see. I begin to understand; but go on."

"Now, if you stood at that cell door and looked into the cell, you would see the mirror directly in front of you. In the corner to the right of it, a washstand with shelves over it. Between the washstand and the door, a chair—the only one in the cell. Beside the chair, a small, round table, capable of holding two or three books. On the opposite side of the cell, which is deeper to the left of the door than it is toward the right, stands the cot. Now, have you got a picture of the interior of the cell in your mind?"

"Thoroughly."

"Now, when the visitor came——"

"By the way, did that visitor happen to have a name?"

"Yes. It would be a cracking good stage name, too. She called herself Miss Cozy Croft. As I was saying, when she came to see Lucile, she sometimes seated herself upon the chair, and at other times insisted upon sitting upon the edge of the cot while Lucile occupied the chair. It was noticed that she never lifted her veil—it didn't seem necessary, for one could see through it, you know—but always before she went out again, it was her habit to step to the mirror and readjust the veil, and she was always a considerable time about it.

"At first, of course, the guards were suspicious of everything, and made frequent searches of the cell after Miss Croft's departure. But gradually their suspicions were allayed, and beyond keeping a mild supervision over them and remaining where their conversation could be heard, very little attention was paid to them."

"I understand. That was part of the game."

"Certainly."

"Now, get down to the actual escape, won't you?"

"Last Thursday afternoon, when Miss Croft called, she seated herself upon the cot. Lucile occupied the chair. They were seated in that position and talking together calmly, when a woman three cells away uttered a scream as if she had been stabbed or something. The guard says that his attention was not diverted more than one second, and that when he turned back again, Lucile was at the cell door, clinging to the bars and demanding to know what was the matter; and that he could see Miss Croft calmly adjusting her veil at the mirror. But the point is that in that second they had made the change, and the veiled woman who walked out the prison was Lucile Maynard."

CHAPTER II.

A DANGEROUS WOMAN'S THREAT.

The detective nodded his head thoughtfully.

"So, that scream, three cells away, was a part of the plot of escape," he said, more to himself than to his companion.

"It may or may not have been," replied Coogan. "There is nothing to prove that it was so. It may have been merely a coincidence; it may have been merely the sort of accidental distraction of the guard's attention, that the two had been waiting for all that time, during the many calls at the prison."

"That is true enough," admitted the detective.

"But the fact remains," continued Coogan, "that the change was made between them. Talk about lightning changes! I have seen a great many of them in my profession, but never one to equal that; and yet, Nick, I can see exactly how it was done."

"Tell me what you think about it, John."

"Why, to a theatrical man like myself, it is as plain as the nose on your face."

"Perhaps."

"The Croft woman always wore exactly the same rig when she went to the prison to make her calls. It consisted of—that is, all that could be seen of it—of a long coat which completely hid her dress from view, and a half-picture hat, with a white feather, and the gauze veil to which I have referred."

"Well?"

"In prison, Lucile wore her hair extremely plain; parted in the middle and smoothed down at her temples with a sort of Priscilla effect. Now, you must understand that the Croft woman wore her hair in exactly that same manner—*under the wig that supported the picture hat.*"

"Oho! So, that's the idea!"

"That is the idea exactly; or at least that is the manner in which a theatrical manager would arrange for such a change."

"I see. So the instant that scream sounded through the corridor, Miss Croft took the big chance. She slipped out of that coat which concealed her dress and she threw the hat with the wig upon the cot, at the same instant running to the door to intercept the view as much as possible. And in the meantime, Lucile flung herself into that coat and slapped the wig and hat upon her head, stepping calmly to the mirror to adjust them both at her leisure, with her back toward the door."

"That's the idea. You see, Nick, in my profession, an

actress who could not get into that coat and wigged hat in less than a second of actual time, with everything fixed properly for the act, wouldn't be worth her salt—and that is the way it was done."

Nick nodded.

"And standing with her back toward the door, and with her double there to appear like her there was loads of time for her to fix everything properly—the pins in the hat, if they needed fixing; the veil, and everything; to button the coat and otherwise fix herself so that she could safely pass out of the prison as her friend had entered it."

"And did she go at once?"

"Not by a long shot. Her time wasn't up. Miss Croft had ten minutes more to stay, and so Lucile calmly seated herself on the chair while the other woman, who now represented Lucile, sat down upon the cot."

"And then, when the time was up, Lucile arose and calmly took her departure, just as her friend had done so many times before?"

"Precisely. And nobody thought a word about it."

"And when was the escape discovered, John?"

"Not until the following day, at noon."

"And how was it discovered?"

"Miss Croft used a little soap and water and calmly washed away the few extra touches she had given herself to add to her resemblance to Lucile, after which she called the guard to her door and said to him:

"'Guard, I don't wish to get you into trouble, but you can see for yourself that I am not Miss Maynard. We changed places yesterday when I came here, and she went out in my place. Of course, I know that I will have to suffer for this, but I know also that nothing much can be done to me. I will get about two years, I suppose, for this; but I wish to say to you that if you or the other guards get into trouble about this, I will do all that I can to protect you and that Miss Maynard will make good to you, later on, for everything you lose, and more, too; and now will you please send for the warden?'"

"Cool, wasn't she?" said Nick, laughing in spite of himself.

"*Cool!* Say! The frozen North is a bake-oven alongside of that woman. And she has been just as cool ever since."

"How? In what manner?"

"She refuses to answer any questions save to admit that she aided in the escape and is willing to take the consequences."

"Is the resemblance between her and Lucile so strong, John?"

"Well, yes. That can't be denied. They might be sisters, all right. They are enough alike so that a little make-up would easily render them exactly alike at a little distance and in a light not too strong."

"What did the Croft woman want with the warden?"

"That is funny, too. She demanded her release, there being no charge against her. She made the claim that she was wrongfully detained—and the warden was the maddest man you ever saw."

"What did he do?"

"Why, he held her there, of course, until he could obtain a warrant for her arrest on the charge of aiding and abetting—I believe that is the term—in the escape of a prisoner charged with a capital offense. Then, of course, she was recommitted, but to another part of the prison. *And there you are!*"

The detective leaned back in his chair and laughed heartily, for the tragic effect which Coogan managed to incorporate in that last sentence struck Nick Carter as being extremely humorous; but he had not yet heard all of the story of the theatrical manager, as he was soon to know.

"John," said Nick presently, "if we put aside the serious part of the incident—that one which has to do with the escape from prison of a woman who committed a deliberate murder—and look only upon the situation at the prison after the escape was accomplished, it is all very funny."

Coogan grinned.

"Fancy that warden," continued the detective, "with his pet star prisoner gone and with a white elephant left on his hands in the shape of that other young person who calls herself, not inaptly, I imagine, Cozy Croft!"

"What are they likely to do with her, Nick?"

"I don't know what the statutes of your state are on that subject. She will get anywhere from two to ten years, I imagine. Do you know anything about her, John?"

"Never heard of her before in my life."

"But you have seen her?"

"Yes. I went to the prison purposely to see her."

"And you think she is a very good double for Lucile, do you?"

"Oh, there is no doubt of that. They may be related, or it might be merely one of those chance resemblances that we run across occasionally."

"Well, Coogan, we'll drop that part of the business now and get down to what it was that sent you here to me, for I am quite sure that it was not the State of Massachusetts that did it."

"Not by a long shot."

"Then what did?"

"The woman herself," was the deliberate reply.

"The woman! What woman? Which woman?"

"Lucile herself."

"Eh? Lucile Maynard? Do you mean to tell me——"

Coogan was nodding so emphatically that Nick paused in the middle of his question; but now he repeated it.

"Do you mean to tell me that you have seen Lucile Maynard since her escape from prison?"

Coogan shuddered while he nodded. Then he replied:

"I have, Nick, and 'that ain't no lie,' to put it emphatically. It gave me such a chill that I've had a cold ever since."

"When was it, John?"

"Last night, about this time; no, a little later. It was about eleven o'clock."

"Where?"

"At my office, in Court Street."

"Tell me about it. How did it happen?"

"Nick, I'm like the Irishman—I don't know how it happened, but it happened. I was all alone in my office, finishing up some correspondence that I wanted to get off as soon as possible. I heard the door behind me open rather softly, I thought, but I didn't look around for the moment, thinking that it was one of the boys who had seen the light from the street and had dropped in for a chat. But as there wasn't a sound after the door closed, I presently laid down my pen and wheeled around in my chair—and as sure as you're a living man I nearly fell in a fit at that moment. It was Lucy Maynard."

"Humph!" said the detective.

"She stood there as calmly as if she had come by appointment, and as if she did not know that the police of the whole city were looking for her at that minute."

"Disguised?"

"Not a bit of it—save for a veil which she had raised since she entered the room; and she was smiling at me just as if she had been in her own parlor."

"What did you do? What did she do?"

"Well, we didn't either of us do anything for a few seconds, but stare at each other, she with that devilish smile of hers, and I—well, I wasn't smiling much just then. She held a pretty little silver mounted gun in one hand. It wasn't pointed at me, but she seemed to want me to know that she had it with her."

"Doubtless. And you didn't have one, I suppose."

"Not within a thousand miles, more or less. 'Good evening, Johnnie,' she said to me. 'I hope I find you well?'

"I told her that I was fairly well, thank you, barring my old complaint which I always carry around with me; and I asked her to have a chair.

"'Oh, I only dropped in for a moment,' she told me. 'I had a little message that I wished to deliver to you in person. And, Johnnie, if anyone should happen to come in while we are talking, I'll drop my veil and light out quietly, for if you so much as suggest who I am I will shoot you dead in your chair, no matter what the consequences may be.' And she meant it, too, Nick."

"No doubt of it. Go on."

"'I have come to bring you a warning,' she went on, 'and you can take it to Nick Carter or not, just as you please. He would never have found me or my place if it hadn't been for you, Coogan, and I know it. This is Saturday night, Johnnie, and I'm going to give you just forty-eight hours from this moment in which to breathe freely. After that, you're a dead one—*a dead one, do you understand?* After forty-eight hours from now, your life won't be worth that paper you're writing on, *and I shall kill you, probably something after the manner in which I served Merrill Gwynn.* You and Nick Carter, both. I am free now, and the devil himself could not catch me; *but I will catch both of you before you are a week older.* Good night.'

"With that she went out—*but that's why I'm here, Nick!*"

CHAPTER III.

A GAMBLER'S METHOD OF BLACKMAIL.

"You look as if you had seen a ghost, John," remarked the detective, after a pause.

"I feel as if I were in imminent danger of seeing my own, Nick," was the instant reply.

"Anyhow"—the detective smiled—"you haven't used up but half of the time she gave you to continue on earth."

"No; but I felt as if I would rather be under the sheltering shadow of your wing when the time expired, Nick. I've taken a vacation for a week. On the level, old man, she's got it in for both of us, and it struck me that we might just as well take our medicine together."

"If there is to be any to take."

"Oh, there isn't the least doubt of that. She is smart and she is resourceful; you know that as well as I do."

"Yes."

"And she has got barrels of money. Besides that, she's got a lot of loyal followers. If she is out for the blood, she's bound to get some somewhere. I don't want it to be mine—or yours."

"That last was a happy thought. Neither do I. Did anybody in Boston know that you came here to me?"

"If you mean did I tell anybody—I did not."

"The police department there haven't notified me of the escape."

"I suppose they think they can catch her again without you. They have managed somehow to keep it out of the papers, too. The *Globe* had something about it—very vague—yesterday; but the story couldn't be verified, and so it was dropped. They are not giving out any information—yet."

"I see. Well, where do you suppose Lucile is now?"

"Here in New York; I'd bet a hundred on it."

"And win, I think. Yes, I believe that she would come here. Have you ever heard her mention the names of any persons who lived here, whom she counted among her friends?"

"No; that is, not among her class."

"What do you mean by that."

"Oh, she knows a lot of swells from here—but I don't think she has any friends here of her own sort."

"When you say 'swells,' just what do you mean? That word might be construed in many different ways."

"I mean swells; high rollers; slummers, and all that. Rich guys who play high and spend their dough as if it grew on bushes. That's the sort she knows in New York."

"Well, can you mention a few of them whom she knows—knows well, I mean?"

"Say, Nick, you don't for a minute suppose that she would go to one of that bunch, do you? Not when she is a self-confessed murderess, and has just escaped from prison; eh?"

"Johnnie, listen to me a minute."

"I'm all attention."

"When a detective is after a criminal of her class, the first thing to do is to put yourself as nearly as possible in that criminal's position. Got that down?"

"Yes."

"Well, let us consider first who Lucile Maynard is."

"We know who she is."

"Exactly; and what she is, also. Now, a woman who has run a place such as her's was—a gambling-house where the play could be made as high as anybody wanted it, not to mention the other affairs she controlled, doesn't it follow as a matter of course that she gets to know her patrons a whole lot better than they suppose she does?"

"I suppose so."

"If her place was open to-night and a young blood from some other city should blow into it and play high, don't you suppose that she would put her spies upon that young man in order to find out all about him?"

"I never thought of that, Nick."

"My dear fellow, it is the only way that gambling-house proprietors have of certifying the checks that are given to them."

"Eh? What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that if you were the rich young man, and it happened to be the third or fourth time that you had visited her place; that you lost heavily and ended by giving a large check for your losses; that after you left the place and took a sober second thought upon what you had done, you said to yourself that you would stop the check and let them whistle for their money; that you said to yourself that a gambling-debt cannot be collected by law, and that you did stop the check—what do you suppose would happen?"

"I suppose there would be a kick and a howl, and I would be threatened with exposure if I didn't settle, and all that."

"Exposure, yes; but not as you mean it; and there would be no howl."

"Well, what then?"

"A very genteel person would meet you in the street somewhere and call you to one side. That genteel person would say to you something like this:

"'It is very unfortunate that you stopped that check. Mr. So-and-so is very angry about it and he thought it best to send me to tell you that your career is known to him.' Then he would go on quietly and recite to you half a dozen or more episodes in your career that you had no idea were known to them at all; episodes which you would not have the world know about for anything—episodes in no way connected with that gambling-house where you lost your money. Don't you see the point?"

"I begin to see it."

"You would rather pay the size of that check half a dozen times than have those things get out—and so you step into a convenient hotel with the genteel person and write a new check, discreetly adding a hundred or so to it for the benefit of your new acquaintance."

"Gee, Nick! I never thought of that."

"That is the way it is done. That is the gambler's protection against the stopping of checks. He doesn't think of exposing your play at his house, because that would involve him as well; but he mentions things about your career which pull you up standing."

"I see. I see."

"John, a first-class gambling-house, so called, has as complete a corps of detectives of its own kind as the District Attorney's office."

"Well, what does all this lead us to?"

"It leads us back again to your mention of the swells whom Lucile knows in New York."

"Oh!"

"Let us use you again as the supposedly rich young man."

"I wish I were."

"You wouldn't wish so if you happened to be in Lucile Maynard's power just now."

"What do you mean?"

"Suppose you were the rich young man; suppose you had frequented her place in Boston; suppose she had put her own sleuths on your trail and had picked up several facts about you—one would be sufficient if it were of the right kind; suppose that now, in her extremity, she should come to you and say something like this:

"'I am accused of the murder of Merrill Gwynn; whether I killed him or not doesn't matter, but I have just escaped from prison and the police of the whole country are looking for me; I want you to conceal me and help me to remain concealed until the chase cools down.' What would you say?"

"I see what you mean."

"Suppose she should add to that request—as she would do if you appeared to hesitate—'If I am taken, I will make it a point to let the world know all about this thing and that thing in your life?' What would you do then?"

"I suppose I would hide her; eh?"

"Precisely. Of course you would. And you could do it, too, for nobody would ever think of looking in your neighborhood for her."

"That is, nobody but you, Nick."

"Oh, well, I don't know about that. I never had a case of just this kind presented to me before. But I know the methods of gambling-house keepers. I know that they make it a point of their profession to know every detail in the lives of some of their patrons, so far as it is possible to do so. Lucile Maynard is much too smart not to have done that very thing, and she is smart enough to take advantage of it, now that she needs a place of concealment."

"And so the deduction is, as you make it, that she has gone to one of her swell friends and blackmailed him into hiding her?"

"That seems to me to be the natural deduction. There is no other place for her to hide successfully. She is not a crook, in the accepted meaning of the word. She is not a blackmailer under the accepted definition of the term; that is, she would not demand money as the price of keeping a secret. *But*, she would demand—and she would receive—assistance in her extremity as the price of her silence."

"By Jove, Nick, but that is a clever point. I would never have thought of it in the world—never."

"It is not your profession to think of such things. You would see points in a stage-setting which would escape my notice, just as I see points in a criminal case which escape you. That is the idea."

"I suppose so."

"Now mention some of her swell friends in the city of New York—just as many of them as you know about, or have heard about. Hearsay will do me in this instance."

"There is young Gordon Crandyl, for one. I have seen him play——"

"Never mind the comments. Just give me the names. I will write them down as you proceed, and we will discuss them afterward."

"Well, Monkton Hall; young Plantagenet Morton; Huxley Harrington; Pierre Delapierre; Tom Mallington; Eberhardt Goldenstein; young Carrington Carruthers—I guess that's about all that I can think of."

Nick Carter was silent for a long time after that. He was carefully going over the list of names he had written down, pausing at each one to think deeply, for Nick Carter, like that great chief of detectives, Thomas Byrnes, used to do, kept what he called his "Career Book."

After a moment he checked away all but two of the names; and then he said quietly:

"I think, Johnnie, it is between two of them—Monkton Hall and Huxley Harrington."

"They are both mighty high rollers, all right."

"Yes; and both reckless. Both, although young, already have careers behind them. Of the two, I think Monkton Hall the most likely one for Lucile to apply to. But if necessary, we will look them all up a little."

"It's a strange thing to me, Nick, how you get at the meat of a thing so quickly. I could no more have thought out a plan for searching for Lucile Maynard, than——"

"Than I could think out a plot for staging a play; eh?"

"Well, I suppose that is about the size of it."

"Don't you think you had better go to bed now? You are tired out."

"That's a fact. I will turn in if you don't mind."

After the detective had shown his friend to the room he was to occupy, and bidden him good night, he went to his study where, over the telephone he called up police headquarters in Boston; and then there ensued a long conversation which need not be repeated here.

But the result of it was that when Patsy arrived home an hour later, he found his chief waiting up for him.

"Patsy," he said to his young assistant, "I have got some good work for you to do—a bit of work that will put you on your metal, for all you are worth. You are to take the six o'clock train for Boston, so it isn't worth while for you to go to bed to-night. Sit down and I will tell you all about it."

CHAPTER IV.

PATSY'S DELICATE MISSION.

The detective related all that we already know, in a very short time, and Patsy, knowing his chief, listened with never a question, until the end; but then he said:

"And I am to go to Boston this morning? Is it because you think that Lucy Maynard may still be there?"

"No; I have no idea that she is in Boston now. I have no doubt at all that she is in New York."

"Then what——"

"Wait a moment, Patsy. I have just been talking with the chief of police there, over the phone. Fortunately I found him at his office."

Patsy nodded, but made no remark.

"I told him that Coogan was here with me and had told me all the story. He told me that he had already dictated a letter and mailed it to me about the affair. He thinks as I do, that Lucile has come to New York."

"Yes."

"I want that woman who personated her—Cozy Croft is the name she has used——"

"Gee! That's a good name to coddle up to!"

"I want that woman set free. I want her discharged; and I have finally gotten the chief to consent that it shall be done. He is to put one of his best men on her trail—a man by the name of Watson. I don't know him, so, of course, you do not."

"No. Never heard of him."

"The chief says he is a good man; one of the best he has ever had at headquarters. He is English, probably, from his name and the fact that he is new."

Patsy nodded his sage head.

"Now, Patsy, here is the point. The chief does not know—nobody but ourselves know—that you are going there to trail that woman also. But I don't care to take any chances in this matter, particularly with a detective I never heard about. He may be the best shadow in the world, for all I know; and again he may not be worth a hill of beans."

"Sure," said Patsy.

"You have got to take the chance that the Croft woman will be discharged and gone, with Watson on her trail, before you can get to Boston, for your train is not due there till noon. But on the other hand, there is a chance that she will not be set at liberty before you get there, for the chief has a lot of wires to pull and things to fix up before he can arrange to have her discharged before the committing magistrate."

"I see."

"At the very worst, she won't have more than a hour the start of you, for the chief can't accomplish a thing in what he has to do about the arrangements for letting her go, before ten o'clock, and it will take at least an hour after that for the remainder of the business, so she won't be able in any event to leave the jail before eleven, and you are due there at noon."

"It isn't likely that she will get away before twelve. Things move slowly in those courts, there."

"I know that. But it is a chance you have got to take. The main point is that I don't want anybody, not even the Boston police, to find out that you have any interest in the matter."

"Oh, they won't find it out."

"And if she has already left the jail, you have somehow got to find her trail. Watson will be hot upon it in the beginning, and if you knew him, it would be easier for you. But you do not. But, Patsy——"

"Yes, sir."

"I want you to find that trail and follow it. I don't want you to let go for an instant. Sooner or later the Croft woman will communicate with Lucile Maynard. Sooner or later they will come together somewhere. I want you to be there when they do."

"I'll be there, chief."

"I think you will, Patsy, if you do not lose the trail at the start; if she does not get away from you before you get to Boston. That is the chance you have got to take."

"If only I had come home in time to have taken that midnight——"

"But you did not. There is no use in talking about that. Now, my lad, Miss Cozy Croft has already demonstrated the fact that she is a mighty smart woman—one who is thoroughly capable of being the companion to Lucile. You must provide yourself with material for disguises, but in using them you must be very careful not to overdo it, or she will spot you in a minute."

"I know that."

"And then, there is Watson. I don't want him to get onto you, either."

"He won't."

"Don't be too cocksure, my lad. My father used to tell me that I must always start in on a case by supposing that the other fellow was the smarter. It is a good rule to follow. It keeps you from getting the bighead, and it gives you a slight advantage, too. That is all, I think."

"Shall I see you again before I go, chief?"

"I think not. I shall turn in now."

"No further instructions?"

"None that I think of; only, of course, report everything here by telephone, at every opportunity you get; or by telegraph; or by a scribbled note dropped in any box you are passing."

"Of course, I will do that."

"And don't let up on that trail for an instant, for anything. Lucile is going to be very difficult to locate, here in New York, and if every other means fails, it will be Cozy Croft who will finally discover her for us. So, in a measure, Patsy, the whole case is up to you."

"Was Coogan scared by Lucile's threat?" asked Patsy, pausing for an instant at the door.

"Oh, well, not very much. He pretended to be; but Johnnie isn't a chap who is easily frightened. I think his greatest anxiety was that he wouldn't get here in time to warn me. He feared that she would beat him here, and I, not being on my guard—well, you know. He was really quite relieved when he found me alive."

"Did he have any idea of the identity of the Croft woman?"

"None at all."

"She might have been a croupier in the gambling-house."

"No."

"Well, good-by."

Patsy's train left the Grand Central station four minutes late. It was fourteen minutes late at Bridgeport, twenty minutes late at New Haven; and so it continued to get behind until it finally arrived in Boston, forty minutes behind time.

Patsy had not burdened himself with baggage, save what was concealed about his person, in his pockets, etc., and the train had not come to a standstill when he swung off it and hurried toward the station exits.

He knew exactly where to go, of course, and an electric hansom took him rapidly to the building he sought.

If he could have dashed at once into the court and boldly asked for the information he sought, he would soon have known about the Croft case; but that was exactly what he could not do since his chief wished that it should not be known that he was interested in the case at all.

However, he made his way into the building and presently sidled up to a big, good-natured looking policeman. Patsy himself looked the young Irish lawyer to perfection.

"How are you, officer?" he remarked genially.

"Hello, me laddy," replied the policeman, recognizing a countryman. "Who might you be, me son? You're new around this place."

"I am that," said Patsy. "Fact is, I've just graduated. I have never tried a case yet. I am keeping tabs on things for a while before I tackle wan, too. No good to be in a hurry."

"Now that's what I call sinsible talk. Faith I'll help ye all I can. What might your name be?"

"Cronin; but call me Pat if you like it better, officer."

"Sure, that's me own name. Are ye after livin' around here?"

"I just came to town this morning."

"Faith, ye're a likely lad, and I'll help ye anyway I can. Now——"

"Has anything important been doing here to-day?" asked Patsy quickly.

"Oh, no, nothin' much. There's been the usual number of drunks, a few petty thievery cases, half a dozen 'r so held over for the grand jury, and—*say!* There was a colleen of a gerrul before his honor a little while ago. You should have seen her. Cozy Croft was her name! Now what do ye think of that for a title?"

"It's Cozy. Where is she?"

"Gone. Discharged with a severe reprimand. Left about half an hour ago. Sure, if ye had been here you might have been her lawyer. She had none."

"That's too bad. I wish I had been here. Maybe it might be worth while to chase up the case, if you think there is a case."

"Sure, lad, there's no case there. If it's chasin' her ye'd be after doing, it wouldn't be for a case. She was that demure and swate that ye could fancy that her lips were rose-leaves and her eyes were——"

"No, say, what are you giving us anyway?" laughed Patsy. "Tell me where she went and I'll go after her and make believe I think she has a case against the court for detaining her at all, and then discharging her without reason. How would that do?"

"Sure ye'll git along in your profession all right, me lad. She refused to give her address to the judge, saying that she would only disgrace her folks, for sure that same she gave him no reason in it. But I'll tell ye what."

"Well, what?"

"There's a new detective over at headquarters, name of Watson, who took her trail to find out where she lives. I think the coort wants to kape tabs on her for a time. She helped a murderess to escape from prison. When Watson comes back, I'll ask him about her, so I will."

"That will do fine. What sort of a looking man is Watson?"

"Watson? Well, he rarely looks twice alike. He's a dandy. This morning he looked like a sun-flower wid side-whiskers on it. He's 'a tall, bony chap, and it would have done ye good to have seen him this day wid his plaid vest and his bob-tail coat, and his spats and his long side-whiskers and red as me own Bridget's petticoat."

That was enough for Patsy. About two minutes more were consumed in getting away from his talkative friend, and then he hurried out of the building.

The description of Watson was so pronounced that Patsy felt that he would have little difficulty in striking the trail; but he paused for a moment on the steps outside to select from among the hangers-on around the court, the countenance that seemed most likely for his purposes.

Presently he discovered it in an Irish boy of about fourteen—evidently a newsboy who had sold out; but he had a bright, sensitive face, keen eyes and an air of alertness which Patsy liked, and he motioned to him.

"Me lad," he said, "I'm Irish like yourself. If you have some information that I want, it may be of value to you. It's this: Did you see, about half an hour ago, a tall, red-headed man with red side-whiskers and a plaid vest and spats over his boots, come out of the court, and if you did, can you tell me which way he went?"

"I did," replied the lad. "And I know where he is now—right where ye kin find him. How much is it worth if I tell ye?"

"It's worth two dollars, if you can point him out to me within the next half-hour," replied Patsy.

"Sure, I can do it in ten minutes. He's a dude-masher and he's over there in front of Child's restaurant, piping off a purty girl that went inside for a lunch. Come on. I'll show you, and then you can cough up the two-spot."

CHAPTER V.

AN AMAZING CONFESSION.

The moment when Patsy secured a good view of the man Watson in his disguise, he realized that the astute Irish lad had sized up the situation very nearly correct; that is, Watson was, of course, not really a masher, but he was posing as one.

It was evident that he had adopted this method to

being the best means of following the young woman to her home without creating suspicion that he was a detective.

No doubt he had argued to himself that she would be on the lookout for men to follow her from the court, to find out where she lived; it was plainly Watson's argument that she would have no suspicion of one who followed her so openly as he intended to do, and who ogled her while doing so; she would suppose that a detective would take a different course.

Patsy sniffed with contempt when he reasoned it out.

His own idea of Cozy Croft, gleaned only from what he had been told about her, was that she was much too smart to be taken in by any such pretense as that. A woman who could enter a prison and accomplish what she had done, was one not easily to be fooled by mere outward appearances.

Patsy was turning these things over in his mind when [illegible] and remembered that he had forgotten to give the boy his two dollars.

He took it out quickly and handed him a two-dollar bill; and then as the lad was turning away, he said:

"Wait a moment, my boy. What is your name?"

"Patrick Garvan, sir," was the instant reply.

"Everybody seems to be named Patrick around here," said Patsy, smiling. "That is my name also. How old are you, Patrick?"

"Sixteen, sir. I sell papers in the daytime, and go to night-school."

"Good. You are an honest lad and a truthful one, too, I see."

"Yes, sir."

"What do you think of that man with the red whiskers, Patrick?"

"I think he's a guy that is all made up. I'd bet this two-spot [illegible] a good pull as those whiskers, he'd come off."

"You are wiser than your generation, Patrick. How would you like to earn five dollars on top of that two, Patrick?"

"I'd like it very much, sir. My mother's sick and it would come in handy for dainties for her, so it would."

"In that case I will make it ten if you can do what I want you to do."

"If it is honest, sir, and I can do it, I would like to try the case," was the wistful reply.

"Very well, Patrick. I am going to put a lot of faith in you because I like your honest eyes and the way you speak of your mother. I can trust you, can't I?"

"Yes, sir."

It was a simple straightforward reply, and it went to Patsy's heart.

"Very well, Patrick," he said, "I will trust you. [illegible] that man with the red whiskers goes, I want you to follow him, and you must manage to do it without letting him suspect that you are doing it. He won't be apt to notice a boy like you. Do you think you can do the act, Patrick?"

"I can try, sir, and I think I can—if he doesn't go in an automobile."

"I think he will go, when he does go, in a car, or possibly in a cab. In that case you will have to do the best you can; but I don't want you to lose him on any account."

"I am a good runner, sir. I never tire."

"Well, put this five dollars in your pocket along with the two you already have. You may need some for expenses. If you have to spend any of it, I will make it up to you and you will get five more when the job is done."

"Thank you, sir."

"Remember, you are to follow that man everywhere, without letting him guess that you are doing it. Keep just as far away from him as you can, without losing him, but keep him always in view. If you meet me anywhere or see me while you are following him, you must not notice me or speak to me unless I speak to you first. Do you understand that?"

"I do."

"I am going to make it my business, Patrick, to look out for the lady who is inside the restaurant—to protect her from insult if necessary, so I probably won't be far away from you at any time, but if we should get separated——"

"Yes, sir?"

"When you are through following your man and know where he has gone for the night, or have lost him and have anything to report to me about him, go to the railway station and stand near the ticket-office of the New Haven Railway until I come. I rather think that before we are through we will both go there, anyway. Now, that is all. Follow instructions."

"Yes, sir. There is only one thing——"

"What is that?"

"If I am kept out late, my mother will worry about me."

"Good boy! Here is a stamped envelope with a blank sheet of paper inside, and yonder is a letter-box. Have you a pencil? All right. Scribble a note to your mother now and tell her that you have a job that may keep you out a late while. Make it short, for you may not have much time."

Patsy left him then and crossed the street, brushing quite close to the waiting Watson, who did not so much as glance at him.

It must be remembered that he did not as yet know by sight the woman he was expected to trail, and that he had to rely upon the actions of Watson to guide him; but he knew that he could make no mistake if only he kept [illegible] for the present.

Accordingly, he entered the restaurant and seated himself at a table close to the door, facing the street—and he ordered merely a cup of coffee, knowing that he could leave it at any instant without suspicion.

As he stepped toward the table, he encountered a pair of very bright eyes, staring at him, eyes which were instantly averted the moment they met his own.

But they were shrewd, keen eyes, calm as summer seas, and as alert as the eyes of a fox; and they were in the head of a very pretty woman.

Instinctively, Patsy guessed at once that this was Miss Cora Croft, and that she also had taken that front seat which commanded a view of the street in order to keep an eye upon the red-whiskered man outside.

But that one tentative glance she had devoted to Patsy seemed to have satisfied her regarding him, for she paid no more attention to him, although his seat was directly beside her own; and thus they remained for several moments while Patsy coolly sipped his coffee.

After a little, to Patsy's utter amazement, she turned deliberately in her chair and spoke to him. It happened that they were alone at that table, so there was no one to observe or to overhear what was said, for she spoke in a very low tone—so that he scarcely heard the words himself.

"Pardon me, sir," she said, in a strangely musical voice. "You are a stranger in the city, are you not?"

"I am, madam," he replied instantly; and his surprise was so great that she should have spoken to him, that the reality served him much better than any acting could have done.

"And you have arrived, perhaps, only this morning? Only within a few hours?" she asked again.

"That is quite true, madam, though how you could have guessed that, is quite beyond me. I have been in the city only a little more than a hour." Patsy was dumfounded. "Are you a clairvoyant? Or a wizard? Or was it only a guess, may I ask. You had not heard me speak, so you could not have told from my speech that I am not a Bostonian."

She laughed a little, low, pleasant laugh that did not penetrate beyond Patsy's ears.

"I am afraid that you will think me rude and inquisitive and quite forward to speak to you as I have done," she said. "But I have a reason which I will explain to you presently. There is a man outside who frightens me. He has followed me. He is waiting for me now. I noticed you when you entered, and I knew from your face that you were a gentleman who would not misunderstand me if I addressed you as I have done."

"You are quite right about that. And as for the man outside—"

Miss Croft's pause was eloquent; and Miss Croft laughed in the same low manner she had used before.

"I am not afraid of him now—that is, not so much," she said. "Shall I tell you how it was that I knew you had just arrived in Boston?"

"If you please. I should very much like to hear."

"There are some of the stains of travel still about you. There is, for instance a cinder in the corner of one of your eyes and two or three in the ear that is nearest to me. There is also a slight smudge on one side of your nose and you have a New York Herald in your coat-pocket."

"Gee whiz!" thought Patsy. "What am I up against now, I wonder?" Aloud he replied: "You amaze me, madam. One would think that you were a sort of female detective to hear you explain things like that. But you are quite right. I left New York at six o'clock this morning. My train was forty minutes late in Boston, and that forty minutes cost me an important engagement. And now I suppose I have got to remain until to-morrow, more's the pity. But never mind my affairs. Tell me about yours. Has that chap out there been annoying you?"

"No. Not yet. He hasn't had an opportunity. But he means to do so. I can see that very plainly."

"Let him try it on just once. I'll——" He paused at her amused smile. "Oh, he is much bigger than I am, I grant you that," he went on; "but that doesn't always count."

"No, it does not," she assented.

Patsy saw that he had made a good impression by his boldness in telling about where he was from, so now he said; readily assuming the name of the boy outside:

"You may call me Patrick Garvan, with or without the mister, as it pleases you. It's a good Irish name, and there is a good Irish heart behind it, too."

"I have no doubt of that, Mr. Garvan," was the quiet reply; and again those clear eyes were fixed upon him for one studious instant. "I must confess that I feel somewhat reluctant to give you my name."

"Then don't do it. A name more or less can make no difference, so long as I can be of service to you. What shall I call you? Miss Jones? Or Miss Brown?"

"You may call me Miss Cozine," she replied slowly, and somewhat demurely. "That is really my first name, you know."

"Then by the powers you'll have to call me Mr. Patrick, for that is really my first name," was Patsy's quick reply; and they both laughed. "Will you have something more to eat, Miss Cozine?"

"No; I thank you. And I really ought to be going."

"Is it your wish that I should act as your escort, to protect you from that spalpeen out there?"

"Will you be so kind? Am I not taking your time from other things?"

"Didn't I just now tell you that I had missed me engagement and that I might have to wait till morning for

it? Sure, I'm quite at your service if you'll tell me where you will be going."

She leaned a little nearer to him and murmured:

"I want your help, sir, but I don't wish you to give it, blindfolded. I have done no wrong other than to serve a friend who was in trouble; but for that, the police are hounding me. I believe that that man out there is a detective in disguise. I wish to escape from him; to escape the police and to get out of the city. Now—now that you know the truth without in the least knowing the whole truth, are you chivalrous enough to help me, still? I may be a thief or a pickpocket or a murderess, even, [illegible] police are a fact too. In the face of what I have told you, will you help me?"

"Faith I will that, Miss Cozine, to the last ditch!" was Patsy's reply—and he meant it, too.

CHAPTER VI.

PATSY'S VERY CLEVER TRICK.

Again those clear eyes were turned upon the young detective, but this time there was a suspicion of moisture in their depths; and Patsy's thought was:

"Here is a woman who had no idea what she was up against or who she was helping, when she went to the assistance of that she-devil who murdered Merrill Cozine, for if ever I saw truth and innocence in a woman's face, it—[illegible] in this one."

She had not thanked him in words; her eyes were sufficiently expressive.

"We've got to get out of here or buy something more," said Patsy. "The waiters are scowling at us, and I expect they think we have scraped acquaintance. It's like [illegible]."

"[illegible] did we not?"

"Then for you, but such I had suggested it. You say you want to leave Boston; where do you want to go?"

"Anywhere, to get away, but preferably to New York."

"There's a good train at five that gets to New York at ten. Shall we take that?"

"But you cannot go with me. You have an engagement here."

"That's [illegible] to it, so I have. But I'll let it slip. I'll telegraph, or telephone, when we get to the station."

"Will it not inconvenience you very greatly."

"Madam, when did you hear that serving a woman would inconvenience an Irishman? No; it's settled. We take that train. The Gilt Edge, I think they call it, though I'm not certain."

"I [illegible] you will follow me."

"And him. [illegible] Then keep your distance. We'll [illegible] if we can't get rid of him."

"Are you [illegible]?"

"That will be fun," she said. "Oh, you have no idea how good it feels to breathe the fresh air again after having been shut behind prison walls since Thursday."

"And have they had ye locked up?"

"Yes," she replied, with tears in her eyes.

"Damn——I *beg* your pardon. Forgive me. I didn't mean that. Yes, I did, too. What right have they to —— Oh, I can't get it out of me. Come, Miss Cozine. Let's get out into the air. I will deliver my message in person instead of by telephone, and you shall go with me. It is only a short walk. Around in Court Street. I think I know a way to give his whiskers the slip. We'll try it on, anyhow. Come on."

They left the restaurant together, walking side by side, and so coming face to face with Watson, who was evidently rather nonplussed by the turn that events had taken. He had not bargained for a male escort for the woman he was following.

Nevertheless, he stared and almost intruded himself in their way; would have done so, in fact, had not Patsy deftly shifted his companion to the opposite side of him and then halted so that he faced the man.

"If you happen to be a police detective by the name of Watson, or Sherlock Holmes, or any other old name, you can follow as long as you please; but keep your distance if you don't want to get hurt," he said calmly. Then turning to his companion again, he added, so that Watson could hear him: "Come along, sister. Don't mind him. He won't bite."

Cozine clung to Patsy's arm after that, and the young detective could feel that her hand trembled where it rested upon him. By that he knew that notwithstanding her splendid courage, she was sadly frightened.

"He thinks I'm your brother, now, come to meet you when you got out of prison," said Patsy reassuringly. "Don't be after looking behind you to see if he is following, for you may make sure he will do that same—only he'll be pulling off them whiskers and turning that vest of his inside out before long, thinking we won't know him the next time we meet."

"How brave you are!" she murmured.

"Brave is it? What! With a thing like that? Sure, big as he is, I could throw the likes of him over me head in a jiffy. And now, mavourneen, that we're brother and sister, so to speak, you'll be calling me Pat, or Patsy, if you like, and I'll call you Cozine. Sure, it's a pretty name."

"What would I have done if I had not found you?" she murmured.

"You'd have done the best ye could without me. But what would I have done if I hadn't found *you*? You didn't think of that, did you?" She could not, of course, understand Patsy's double meaning, conveyed in the question. She could not guess that he had come to Boston purposely to find her.

And Patsy was overjoyed that he had found her.

He did not feel that he was playing an ignoble part, for after all this girl had done nothing more than to help another woman whose career of wickedness she evidently knew nothing about; and Patsy was using her only to find that other woman; not with animus toward herself.

They turned down School Street and thence into Court, passed Young's Hotel and presently came to Coogan's office.

"We're going in here for a moment or two," said Patsy. "Step inside the door a minute while I take a look around me."

After a moment of scrutiny, he muttered to himself:

"By Jingo! Say what you please, that Watson is a crackajack for quick changes. If it wasn't that young Patrick was following the fellow, I'm not sure that I'd have spotted him. It was a happy thought of mine to engage the services of that same young Patrick, who loves his mother, bless him!"

A smooth-faced man, not in the least like red-whiskers, was sauntering along the street toward them; but a little way behind him came the sturdy lad who was assisting Patsy.

Then Patsy wheeled suddenly to make the man think that he had not been noticed, and a moment later, with Cozine, he entered John Coogan's office.

"Is Mr. Coogan in?" he demanded, as soon as he received attention.

"He is not," was the reply.

"Where is he, then?"

"In New York."

"I'm going there to-night. Could you give me his address, there, if you please?"

"No, sir. He is on some private business and will be back here in a week. That is the best I could do for you."

"Will you listen to that now! Confound him! Has he some trouble with his liver? I suppose he has that same. Would you do me a favor, my friend?"

"What is it?"

"Would you get him for me over the telephone? I——"

"I am afraid, sir——"

"Wait, now! Wait a minute." Patsy took a card from his pocket and rapidly wrote Nick Carter's name upon it, and this he turned so that the man to whom he was talking could see it, but not easily else. "He told me if I'd phone you that little piece, you'd call him up for me at any old time over the telephone." Patsy slipped the card back again into his pocket. "And if you please, can this lady step into the private office and rest a moment while I'm using the phone. I'm Patsy Garvan —here ye've heard Johnnie speak of me often enough. And this is me sister. Come inside, Cozine, and rest yourself while I'm working the banshee to little old New York."

The name on the card had had an instant effect upon the man who beheld it, and he at once offered every facility and courtesy in his power.

It was a very clever move on Patsy's part, to think of this method of calling up his chief. He only hoped that he might be fortunate enough to get Nick himself on the wire, although, being a long-distance call, he had to state explicitly that it was Coogan with whom he wished to talk; but he got around that by telling Central that he wanted John Coogan on the wire, but that anyone who answered from that number would do.

Of course, he had to be very guarded in what he said, for he knew that Cozine would listen intently to every word.

At last the answer came and Patsy took the receiver. To his disgust it *was* Coogan, and not Nick who replied. We will give only Patsy's end of the conversation, leaving the reader to surmise what was said at the other end; and leaving him also to guess how much could be understood by Cozine, of what followed.

"Hello! Is that you, Johnnie? . . . Oh, get out! Don't you think I know Johnnie's voice? . . . Tell him it's Patsy Garvan. Tell him it's Patsy. *Patsy.* . . . Yes. That's right. Patsy . . . Yes. Sure. Tell Johnnie to come to the phone himself. I have something to say to him. . . . Hello, Johnnie. . . . Yes. This is Patsy Garvan. Betcher life on that. What's the matter with you anyhow? . . . Oh, yes. That's all right. . . . Sure. Did you ever know me to fail? Say! Johnnie! . . . I've got a favor to ask you. . . . Sure I'm in Boston. In your own office; and my little sister Cozine is here with me. . . . What's that? Never heard I had a sister? Well, I guess that's right, too. Sure, Johnnie, she's better looking than her brother, and if I was after telling everybody about her, I wouldn't have her long. . . . Oh, that's all right. If you'll do me the favor I ask of you, sure you can see her this night; but I've told her that you're an old married man with the best wife in the worrrld. . . . What? Oh, yes. Well, the favor is this. You see, little Cozine has been having a bit of trouble at the school she's attending, and I'm taking her to New York with me on the five o'clock train. . . . She threw a pail of water on one of the teachers, or something like that. . . . Yes. Now, Johnnie, I want you to do me a very great favor. Listen, now. I want you to have a big, fast automobile—I'll pay for it—at the Grand Central station to meet us at the ten o'clock train, to-night, without fail, only don't have it at the station. That's Irish, isn't it? Have it at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-third Street, so that we can step into it and speed away at an instant. Have the engine running,

. . . What's that? . . . All right. That will be better. . . . Yes. That will do fine. . . . Oh, I'm pretty well. I missed my engagement here today, but sure I've made up for it in finding my sister when she needed me most. . . . Yes. That's all. Good-by."

As Patsy hung up the receiver after having ascertained the cost of the message from the exchange, he raised his eyes to find that Watson, in the disguise he had noticed before he entered the building, was standing just outside the rail and had been an attentive listener to the greater part of the conversation; and Watson's disguise was so perfect that Patsy was not surprised that he had dared even to follow them into the office.

But Patsy pretended not to notice him; pretended to have no recognition of him.

He had not the least concern over the fact that Watson had heard his talk over the phone or at least the greater part of it, for as the reader has surmised, it was Nick Carter with whom he had talked, save for the first two or three sentences—and Nick had been wise enough to suspect that there might be listeners at the Boston end of the wire, and to change the location of the place where the automobile was to wait.

So, instead of being at Fifth Avenue and Forty-third Street, it was to stand directly in front of the Grand Union Hotel, headed down-town, and the directions were that Patsy with Cozine, was to cross directly to it, leap inside, and speed away around corners and up and down streets and avenues so rapidly that nothing could follow them.

Patsy knew now that it was more than likely that Watson would also order an automobile to meet him at the station; but now he would not know where to have it wait, in order to be serviceable to him; and at the best, it would be a hired machine, and one not capable of following Nick Carter's big Peerless car very far.

He crossed over to Cozine, who was seated behind a screen so that Watson had not seen her, and leaning over, he whispered:

"That duffer who was following you, is in the room in another disguise. At least, I think it is he. If he turns at you, don't notice him. I think anyhow, that we'll stay right where we are until it is time to go to the train. Or would you rather take a walk?"

"I'd rather get out into the air, if you are willing," she nodded.

And so they passed out again with Watson following.

CHAPTER VII.

PATSY HAS A BRAIN-STORM.

They walked back through Court and School as far as the Parker House, and here Patsy entered long enough to make use of a telephone to order two seats in the Pullman; and then they passed out upon Tremont Street and crossed over to the Common.

And all the time Watson kept only a few paces away from them.

The readers of the Nick Carter histories are aware of the fact that Patsy possesses a violent temper, and rather a quick one at that.

"Cozine," he said, when they were well out upon the Common, "if you happen to see the blood rushing to me eyes and the tusks of me boars teeth begin to stick out, hold me, will you?"

"Why! What is the matter?" she exclaimed, in amused alarm.

"Well, I'll tell you if you'll promise to keep it to yourself. I'd give fourteen dollars and sixteen cents, no discount off for cash, for an opportunity to paste that Watson one in the jaw—and by the same token it's that very thing that he's trying to get me to do."

"What? Paste him in the jaw?"

"That same. For why? Because he'd like nothing better than an excuse to place me under arrest, or to do something to delay our departure from the city."

"Do you mean that he would like to force you into a fight?"

"A fight, or any old thing at all. He'd accuse me of picking a pocket if he had half a chance and there was a cop or two in plain clothes somewhere around to stand as witnesses for him."

"Would he dare to do that?"

"Would he dare? Sure he'd dare any dirty thing at all. That is why I have walked you out here into the middle of the Common, where there are mighty few people, and he has little, if any, chance of putting up a job on us."

"But you are not afraid of him. I know that."

"Afraid of him is it? Not of a dozen like him. But I'm afraid for you, of the powers that are behind him, so no matter what he does, don't you say a word. Just cling tight to me the way we're doing now, and if I give him the icy stare instead of me bunch of fives under the nose, I want you to remember it is only because I want to get you to New York on that train. What he is trying to do is to separate us, and if he could put up a job to have me detained, he'd do it in a holy minute."

"But how could he do it?"

"There are more ways than one in which he could do it if I am not on my guard. Don't forget that he is a police officer. He has power as great as the Czar of Russia, in some ways. He could arrest me as a suspicious character, if he dared to risk it, and so detain me till morning."

"But he would not dare do that."

"I don't know what he'd dare do. I'm not onto the man yet. But he'll try something before that train starts, as sure as you're Cozine."

"Oh, what shall I do if he does keep you off that train?"

"That's what I'm coming to. That's what I'm telling you now, Cozine."

"Well."

"If the worst comes to the worst and—— Say, do you know New York at all?"

"Very little."

"You know where the Grand Union Hotel is, don't you? Directly across the street from the Grand Central Station?"

"Yes. I know that very well."

"Well, you know when the train gets to New York you walk out of the station directly toward that hotel, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Now, listen to me. When that train that you are to take whether I do or not, arrives at the Grand Central to-night, it will be about ten o'clock. When the train runs in at the station, you are to get up and move up near the door. The minute it stops, you are to get off and hurry as fast as the crowd will let you, straight through the station, out on the street, straight across the street and straight on down Fourth Avenue. You know which that is?"

"Yes."

"Just beyond the second door of the hotel a big, red automobile will be standing. You will hear the engine running signifying that it is ready to start. The door of the tonneau will be swinging open. There will be one man—maybe two, on the front of the machine. Are you paying attention?"

"Yes."

"You will walk close to the curb, and the instant you get close to that open door of the tonneau, you are to leap inside and close the door; and at the same time you are to say to the man or men in front, these words: *'Start! I am Cozine! Patsy couldn't come!'* Have you got that down?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's all."

"All?"

"Yes; except that one of those men will be Johnnie Dugan; or if Johnnie isn't there, the man who is will take you to him. And you're to tell Johnnie all about it. Tell him you are my sister, Cozine Garvan. He'll take care of you, or at least he will see that you are properly taken care of."

"Oh, I hope you won't be detained."

"So do I; but there is a mighty good chance that I will be. I can tell that by the way that fellow is working. Look at him now. Will you remember all that I have told you?"

"Yes."

"And will you do it exactly as I have said?"

"I will do exactly as you have directed—and I wish you *were* my brother."

"I don't! Eh? Yes, I do, too! Of course."

"Look at that man now, Patsy. He's going to speak to us."

"Let him. There is nobody near to act as witnesses for him."

"There is a boy over yonder, near him, and coming this way."

"Oh, yes. That boy. That boy is all right. You needn't fear that boy, Cozine."

"Why?" in surprise. "Do you know him?"

"No; but I'm sure that boy is all right. Now hold your whist. Here he is."

Watson sauntered up to them with an insolent sneer on his face.

"A word with you, my friend," he said.

"Sure," replied Patsy pleasantly. "What is it?"

"Do you know who this woman is, who is with you?" It is impossible to describe the insolence that he put into the question; but Patsy, although the blood mounted to his eyes and his fists clinched together, replied pleasantly enough:

"Sure. She's me sister."

"You're a liar!"

Patsy's face looked as if he would burst a blood-vessel, and for a moment he did not—could not speak. And Watson continued:

"It is only about four hours ago that she was released from prison. Then she picks you up in a restaurant and——"

"*Stop*, mister!" The emphasis was in the manner in which Patsy spoke, not that he raised his voice at all, for he did not. But all the same something compelled Watson to stop, as he was commanded to do.

With a mighty effort the young detective controlled himself, and he said in a low, even tone:

"Watson, or whatever your name is, we are out here alone in the middle of the Common. There is nobody near us but a boy. I know what your game is; you want to prevent me from traveling to New York in the same train with my sister, and you are going to try to force some sort of a quarrel upon me to prevent it. Well, I'll tell you something. I've got a permit in my pocket to carry concealed weapons if I want to, which is another way of telling you that I am holding one in my hand inside my pocket at this instant. You can force all the quarrels upon me here or at the station, that you want to, but if you say one more word, or give one more glance of your sight to us, which relates upon this young lady at my side, I'll shoot you down like a dog, and take the consequences. Now you right about face and scamper, or by Heaven I'll do it anyhow!"

There was something compelling in Patsy's eyes, for he meant every word he uttered, to the last syllable. To

be compelled to hold himself in under such circumstances, roused his Irish to that last point of endurance.

Anyhow, Watson wheeled without a word, and hurried away, straight toward the station, and Patsy and Cozine were left alone.

For a moment neither spoke, and then Patsy, whose face was now as white as a sheet, from the effort at self-control, caught his breath in a sort of sob, and asked huskily:

"Cozine, acushla, would ye mind throwing a pail of water over me or opening a vein in me arm? Faith I think I'll burst open in another minute. Has he gone?"

"Yes. He has gone."

"Sure he saved his own life that time. He deserves a Carnegie medal."

"Patsy?"

"Yes, mavourneen. What is it?"

"All that rage and your splendid behavior were for my sake."

"Splendid behavior, is it? Sure I've had what the experts call a brain-storm, only I am thinking that this one was a hurricane. What are you crying about. Stop that!"

"You are so good to me! And I—"

"Stop it, I say. And you with all your grit and pluck and spunk and sand—and sass maybe, sniveling here like a babby. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Cozine. Come on now, or I'll be putting me two arms around you before I know it, and calling you something else besides sister. Sure ain't you in me charge, and am I not your guardian? Come. It is time that we caught that train."

"Wait one minute."

"Well, what is it now, Cozine?"

"If I should have to travel alone on that train to New York——"

"Jings! Maybe you haven't any money. I totally forgot that. Here——"

"I have plenty of money, Patsy: thank you. That is not what I was going to say."

"What was it, then?"

"I want you to lend me your pencil and a piece of paper. I wish to write down my name and address for you to put in your pocket; and then, if you do not catch the train, will you come to find out if I got home safely, after all, as soon as you get to New York?"

He gave her a card and a pencil, and she wrote. Then she folded the card and gave it back to him.

"Don't look now," she said.

They walked on then rapidly, and in silence, toward the station, quickening their pace as they went, for there was now too much time.

"Stick close to me now," he said to her, as they made their way to the ticket-office, where Patsy had to stand in line and wait his turn.

It came at last and he secured his tickets; then as he turned away, he saw young Patrick Garvan awaiting him, and crossing over to him he pressed a ten-dollar bill into his hand.

"It's wrapped around my card, Patrick," he whispered to him. "Send your report to me by mail, and also send me your address. And keep the change. And tell your mother you're a good boy."

"Yes, sir. I'll do all that. But I want to tell you. *He* is outside, now, near the rear car of the train, and there are two policemen with him. I heard them talking about somebody, and I think it was about you. I think they intend to do you some harm. Please be careful."

"Never fear, me lad. I'll be ready for them. Come, Cozine."

And they started together for the train.

CHAPTER VIII.

WATSON GETS A HARD CALL-DOWN.

Patsy thoroughly realized that there was now small chance that he would be permitted to board that train with Cozine, for he understood by the presence of Watson with the two officers that some scheme had been fixed up to detain him.

It is true that he might readily enough have avoided all this by making himself known—by showing his credentials and establishing his identity—but that was exactly what he did not wish to do for more reasons than one; and the most potent of these reasons was that he did not wish Cozine to suspect—yet—that he was a detective. He preferred to tell her that in his own way when the proper time should come.

They had not taken three steps toward the door which opened upon the concourse when an inspiration came to him.

He glanced at the clock and saw that there was still five minutes before the train would start.

"Quick, Cozine!" he said, then. "Be brave now and do exactly as I tell you! Trust in me!"

"Surely," she replied; and he pressed one of the tickets he had purchased into her hand.

"Hurry, now, for the train. The man won't try to stop you from going. It's me that he's interfering with. Walk aboard the train as if nothing had happened. If he speaks to you, don't appear to hear him. Show your ticket at the gate and pass through like a little major. As soon as the train is well on its way to New York, you'll find that I'm there with you. Take my word for it. Now go, and don't worry."

He half-thrust her through the doorway, and then turning, he almost ran for the "Gentleman's Toilet," for he knew that to be the only place where he could hope to find a moment's seclusion.

It will be remembered that before he started for Boston, Nick instructed him to provide himself with all necessaries for changes in his disguise and that he had done so, concealing what he thought might be necessary, about his person; and the toilet was the only place where he could make the necessary change without being observed.

Patsy never worked a change so rapidly in his life.

He was inside that little room a fraction less than three minutes when he rushed out again and sprinted across the waiting-room toward the concourse; but his disguise was perfect, nevertheless, and with very little change at that.

An iron-grey wig covered his own hair; the soft, two-ounce Stetson hat he had worn before had been folded and concealed in one of his pockets, and was now replaced by another one that was exactly like it save only that this one was black, where the other had been pearl, and this one was not creased through the crown as the other had been. Gold-rimmed, near-sighted spectacles rested upon his nose. He had turned his sack-coat inside out and buttoned it tight around him, so that now it showed black instead of grey. But the best part of this masterly disguise was in the cork attachment he had fastened to the sole of his left shoe, fixing it there by one sharp stomp of his foot upon the cemented floor. It made a heel four inches deep and the sole to match it, and perfectly gave the effect of one leg being considerably shorter than the other—just as you have often seen men wearing such devices.

He had a minute and a half to catch the train when he stepped out, and he stopped at the news-stand long enough to purchase half a dozen magazines, which he carried under his arm.

As he approached the gate leading to the train he looked to take, he saw Watson and the two policemen standing there; but he limped along rapidly, paying no attention to anybody and apparently concerned only with the fear that he would lose his train.

Neither of the three men devoted more than a glance to him when he showed his ticket to the gateman and hurried onward; but Patsy heard Watson say:

"I don't believe the duffer is coming after all; I'll wait, however, for the signal to close the gate."

But Patsy hurried on to the train.

His ticket, of course, called for the seat adjoining the one occupied by Cozine, for that train is composed entirely of parlor cars; but there is also a buffet car, where any of the passengers may sit and smoke; and so when Patsy showed his ticket to the conductor at the steps and was directed to his seat, he climbed aboard composedly and passed through the car merely to assure himself that Cozine was safely in her place.

She was; and she was engaged in peering anxiously through the window in an effort to see him, so that it was all that Patsy could do to refrain from reassuring her.

But he passed on, through several cars, to the buffet car—and fortunately found one vacant chair there.

He dropped into this and lighted a cigar just as the train began to pull out of the station; and then he opened one of the magazines he had purchased, and began scanning the pictures with apparent interest.

He had taken a seat which faced the door toward the main part of the train; and they were not more than well started on their way before he saw Watson enter the car and stopping just inside the door, scan each passenger who was there with the sharpest scrutiny.

But Patsy continued with his magazine imperturbably.

Watson was evidently puzzled. He could not understand the sudden defection of Cozy Croft's escort. He was suspicious that Patsy must be somewhere on that train. But the young detective's lightning change had been so perfectly done that Watson did not so much as look twice at him, and after a moment the Boston detective left the car again and went back.

"He has gone now to make a thorough search of the train for me," mused Patsy silently, "and having satisfied himself that I am not here, he will manage to make Cozine's life miserable somehow. He has probably told the conductor and the porters who he is, so they will not interfere with him when he forces himself upon her—that is, they won't interfere so long as he does not make a disturbance. He has doubtless told them who she is, too; that she has just been discharged from prison, and all that. By Heaven, if I had to do detective work in the way he does it, I'd go and shoot myself!"

He read on for a moment and then he communed with himself again:

"I'll finish my cigar and then I'll make a tour of the train myself. After that I'll decide how to act."

He smoked on slowly, and managed to interest himself in one of the short stories he found; but at last he closed the magazine, and taking them under his arm, he started back through the train. The conductor had already been through and examined the tickets, and a white-coated negro had called out, "Dinner is now served in the Di-i-ining Cah!" Patsy wondered if Cozine would be wise enough to go directly to the dining-car alone, or if she would wait for him, depending upon his promise to be upon that train.

His seat, and Cozine's were three cars back; and here, as soon at Patsy entered, he discovered what he had suspected would be the case—Watson had appropriated *his* seat and was intruding his presence upon the young woman.

He was talking to her steadily and in a low tone; but she did not appear to hear one word of what he was saying, for she kept her eyes steadily out at the window, outwardly at least oblivious of the man's propinquity.

Fortunately this car was far from filled. There were several vacant chairs, and one of them was directly opposite the one in which Cozine was seated. Patsy had an idea that it might be the one belonging to Watson, but he did not care for that; he dropped into it and immediately began again to turn the leaves of the magazine, and he could plainly hear all that Watson was saying. It was:

"——a very beautiful woman. It would be a great pleasure to me to make everything as easy for you as possible. It is true that I have followed you—am following you, and will continue to follow you until you lead me to the Maynard woman. Won't you make it easier for both of us by permitting me to act as your escort instead of your shadow?"

No answer.

"Dinner is ready in the dining-car; won't you go to dinner with me?"

No answer.

"You know it will be rather late at night when we arrive in New York. I doubt very much if you are familiar with the city. It is not a pleasant place for a beautiful young woman to be alone at night. Won't you let me protect you?"

This time Cozine touched the electric button at her side, and the porter came hurrying toward her.

"Porter," she said, so that every passenger in the car could hear her, "this man is persistently annoying me. Will you ask the conductor, please, to give me his protection until the train arrives in New York? This seat he is occupying is not his. It belongs to my brother, who I fear was left behind. Will you send the conductor to me?"

Two young chaps who looked as if they might be Harvard-Eleven men sprang from their seats at one end of the car and with a few strides were beside her, and a hand that was suggestive of an elephant's ear in size, fell upon Watson's shoulder.

"It won't be necessary to send for the conductor, madam," said the half-back, with a slow drawl. "We'll conduct this case for you." Then to Watson: "Now, sir, you look for the tall timber and do it quick!"

"Take your hand off my shoulder!" demanded Watson, without moving.

"If I do, I'll put it on your throat, and you wouldn't like that."

"I'm a police officer, and this wo——"

The hand went to his throat so quickly that he could not complete what he was about to say; but the voice of the student was still calm while he drawled:

"I don't care if you're the king of Belgium. This lady is under my protection until her brother, who is probably forward in the café car, appears. Now, if your seat is in this car, take it and keep it, too. If it is not——"

"See."

"Then leave the car. Come! I'll start you on your way."

With a sudden jerk, he lifted Watson from the chair, and then, with a compelling push, he started him forward; and Watson, realizing that it was time for him to go, did not turn about again, but disappeared through the forward door, and a round of applause followed his departure.

Patsy, of course, would gladly have done all this himself—and he could have done it just as splendidly as the half-back did it; but he was positive that Watson had a warrant for his arrest in his pocket, *and the train was still within the State of Massachusetts.*

But already they were nearing the Rhode Island State line; in twenty minutes more they would be at Providence, and so while the student was receiving Cozine's thanks, Patsy slipped away.

In a moment he had found a place where he could conceal himself for a few moments, and it did not take him long to re-turn his coat; to remove the false sole and heel from his left shoe; to remove the wig and glasses and to restore the grey Stetson to its place on his head.

He was himself again then, exactly as Cozine had known him—for he had worn no disguise at first; and he stepped back into the car where Cozine was seated, walking briskly.

The moment he entered the door she saw him and uttered a little glad cry; and he hurried to her.

"Why, little sister!" he exclaimed, "what has happened? Did you think I had been left? You ought to know that I never get left. It was awfully thoughtless of me to leave you so long, but I was——"

"A man annoyed me," she interrupted him, "and this gentleman protected me."

"Splendid of you, old chap!" exclaimed Patsy, heartily grasping his hand. "Would you mind doing me another favor? Eh? Would you mind pointing out the fellow that did it?"

The young collegiate laughed.

"Better leave him alone, I think," he drawled. "No harm was done. He won't come back, and there's no use having a row, you know. We'll talk it over later, eh? After dinner."

"Yes," said Patsy; "if you and your friend will have dinner with us. Porter, see if you can find seats for four, together."

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONFESSION OF COZINE.

They entered the dining-car together a few minutes after the train left Providence, and it so happened that Watson was seated at one of the smaller tables, at the further end of the car, facing them, and saw them when

[illegible] entered. The start he gave when he saw Patsy, was amusing.

He half-rose from his seat as if it was his impulse to [illegible] there then and there; but evidently he remembered that they had now passed out of the State of Massachusetts, for he sank back into his place again—and the dinner passed off merrily enough.

Once, the half-back leaned forward across the table and said in a low tone to Patsy:

"Say, old man, that chap who was fresh with your sister, is in the car, down at the other end. If you'll promise not to make a jolly row on the train, I'll point him out to you. He is watching us all the while and it might be well for you to know who he is."

"All right," replied Patsy. "Where is he?"

"Last seat on the opposite side of the car, behind you."

With studied deliberation, Patsy turned his head and looked squarely into Watson's eyes; and then he grinned and Watson's eyes blazed with rage.

"Oh, that!" he said, resuming his former position. "Well, we won't worry about him—till we get to New York. I think I'll hand him one then, if I have half a chance."

When they were back again in their own seats, Cozine asked eagerly:

"How did you do it? I was so frightened! I thought surely that you had missed the train. And that dreadful man was so hateful! I don't know what I would have done, but for Mr. Hall. He was very kind."

"He's a fine young chap; and so is Harrington. How did I do it? Oh, I went forward into the combination car. I thought it best to keep under cover until we got into Rhode Island. You see Watson, if that's his name, probably has a warrant for me. If so, it would be good in his own State, but it's no good here. Anyhow, he'll not attempt to use it now. You're a brave girl, Cozine. And now, please, may I look at that card you wrote for me?"

He read, half-aloud from the card, "Miss Cozine Marincroft, Ardsley, Penn." And then he inquired:

"May I ask you some questions, Cozine? Don't you think it would be better if I should do so?"

"Yes," she assented again. "I will tell you anything you wish to know."

"Then, well, then. All that I wish to know, Cozine, is this: What are or what were the real relations between you and the woman whom you helped to escape from prison? Tell me in your own way; but remember that if complications should arise when we arrive in New York, it is much better that I should know the exact truth."

"I suppose I did very wrong, indeed," replied Cozine, simply and in a straightforward way. "But my obligation to her was so great that I would not have refused, even if the duty of serving her had cost me my life—and a little time in prison under the assumed name of 'Cozy Croft' seemed to me to be a very small thing by which to repay the debt I owed her."

"I am afraid that you are romantic, Cozine."

"I am grateful, at least. Ingratitude is the worst of all crimes."

"Please go on and tell me about it."

"Four years ago my brother was very badly injured in Boston. He was attending at Harvard at the time. I don't know how the injury came about; I never did know, but for many weeks he did not know his own name and could not tell where he lived, even. But Miss Maynard found him somehow. She took him to her own house and nursed him and cared for him until finally she found out who he was and sent for me. I went——"

"Her own house, did you say?"

"Yes."

"Where was that, please?"

"In Summerville, just out of Boston."

"Oh! I see! Yes! Exactly! Go on, please."

"She saved his life—there is no doubt of that. I went there to Summerville and stayed six months with my brother before he could be taken home; and all the time Miss Maynard was the kindest person I ever saw. She did everything. She wouldn't even let me pay her for the money she had spent and was spending constantly to make him comfortable. She was away much of the time, but she always passed Sundays with us—and my brother loved her. I could see that. His eyes used to follow her about when she was in the room and they always had the strangest expression——"

"He could not speak?"

"He could not speak nor move, and he never did, after he was hurt. He did a few weeks after we got him home. And Miss Maynard came to the funeral, and was so kind. She was a strange woman always, and I never quite understood her; but I loved her."

"And you visited her sometimes—in Summerville?"

"Twice each year; and she came to me for a visit each autumn."

"But you know nothing about her, more than that?"

"I only know that she is a very rich woman and that

she was kindness itself to my brother. That latter was quite enough. She has business of some sort which keeps her away from home a great deal, but I never inquired what it was."

"And now, how did you get into this mess at the prison?"

"Why, in a very natural way."

"Tell me about it."

"Well, strangely enough, there is a very strong resemblance between us—only I am much younger than she is. But all the same with a few deft touches of a brush, she could transform me into an exact double of herself; and she taught me how to do it, also, so that I could make myself so like her that her own servants would not know the difference. She used to tell me that some day she intended to teach me her business——"

"Heaven forbid!"

"Why do you say that?"

"Never mind. Go on, please."

"——and that then I could impersonate her at any time. I used to think it great fun; and we fixed some costumes, and a hat with a wig inside it, and a long coat that could be slipped on and off quickly, and we used to practice quick changes, just as we made it in the prison. She told me about an enemy she had who was likely some day to make her trouble—to charge her with some crime, and that if ever that happened I was to know at once that she had innocent, and that I was to go to her rescue, so that she could get away and prove her innocence. And it happened to be visiting at her home in Summerville when that dreadful thing happened and she was charged with the murder of Merrill Gwynn."

"Go on. Go on."

"Why, that is all, I think. She sent for me and I went to her, prepared. First I sent her one of the two dresses that were exactly alike, for her to wear in prison. She assured me of her innocence, and I believed her. She told me many times that if she could be sent for a few days she could prove it, and then I would be set free at once, if I would take her place. Of course, I could not refuse this after what she did for my brother. I never even thought of refusing her. And you see, she was right, don't you? It was only a few days before I was set free."

"My dear, you are at once the wisest and the most foolish and innocent little woman in all the world," said Patsy, almost with tears in his eyes.

"Why do you say that?"

"I will not explain now, but I will do so later on. Tell me now, have you any idea where Lucile Maynard is now?"

"Not the least in the world—unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Unless she has gone to my home in Ardsley. She might have done that, but I do not think so. She must have been in Boston, to have me discharged so quickly from prison; and——"

"Cozine, she had nothing to do with your discharge from prison. She had abandoned you to your fate, which would have been five years at least in the State prison. She might have been good to your brother *after* he was injured, but she was a fiend to him before it, I am sure, *and that strange expression you saw in your brother's eyes when they followed her about the room, was hate, not love! That I'll swear to!"*

It was a pair of wild and terrified eyes that looked into Patsy's as Cozine gasped:

"Why—what—do—you—mean?"

"I mean this, child: That Lucile Maynard was the very worst woman in Boston. That there is not a criminal in Boston so bad as she is. That she probably lured your brother to his ruin and finally to his death, and that in all probability he was injured in the gambling-house over which she presided. That possibly she liked him, and, therefore, tried to atone for what she had done, by caring for him after he was injured. That she knew all the time perfectly well who he was and where to send for you, and that she took the time only to make ready the house in Summerville before she did so. That is the only decent thing she has done, so far as I can say.

"But Cozine, there was a method even in that madness of hers. She meant to pull you down as she had pulled your brother down. She told you that much, for she meant to make you her alter ego in business.

"And then, Cozine, when she was planning the murder of Merrill Gwynn, she deliberately taught you to impersonate her so that you could take her place in prison, where she meant to abandon you to your fate. I never heard of such a deep woman—of such a terrible woman as she is.

"Having destroyed your brother—as she has destroyed many a young man like him—and having seen your beauty and noticed your strange facial resemblance to

herself, she meant next to destroy you, *but in a manner far more terrible!* If we weren't in a Pullman car, I would ask you, Cozine, to get down on your knees and thank Heaven that you have been permitted to escape that woman. Forgive me, Cozine! I am too vehement."

Cozine was quietly crying; but after a moment, with a visible effort, she controlled herself and raised her eyes bravely to Patsy's.

"You have drawn aside the veil," she murmured tremulously. "I can see beyond it now. I understand now all the things that have puzzled me. I know. I know. I know. You have made it all clear to me. Before, I would never permit myself to doubt her; but now—*now I know that it was hate and not love that I saw in my brother's eyes.*"

"You are a brave little woman, Cozine, and a very innocent one. Have you no parents?"

"No. I have nobody. I have lived alone since my brother's death, save for the servants, who have been with us since my childhood, and my old nurse, who is like a mother to me."

"Heaven has reached out a hand to save you, Cozine; don't forget that. I'm no much of a preacher, but I could deliver a sermon about this. Never in the world has a human being been closer to the precipice without falling into the pit, than you have."

"I know. I know now. Who, then, was it who saved me from prison?"

"Nick Carter. And when he arranged for your liberation he thought you as bad as the woman you had rescued. So did I—even I thought you as bad as she—until I looked into your clear eyes there in the restaurant."

"Who, please, are you?" she murmured.

"I am Patsy Garvan, just as I told you—and by the way, that lad who followed us down in Boston, he my nephew, although, of course no relation. I am Nick Carter's assistant. I was sent to Boston to follow you when you should be released, in the belief that you would take me to Leslie Maynard—and that is what that man Watson still believes. I wonder if you can forgive me for deceiving even for a moment——"

"Forgive you? You have been my savior, Mr. ——"

"Patsy, now! Call me Patsy. It's easier. And don't forget that I'm your brother—the only one you've got now, remember, and please Heaven I'll be a good one."

CHAPTER X.

PATSY'S BRAIN-STORM BURSTS.

When the train was running in at the Grand Central station the two college boys, Hall and Harrington, picked up their grips and came over to Patsy's seat.

"If it's all the same to you, and you don't object, Mr. Garvan," he said, "my chum and I have decided that we'll trail along near you until we are quite sure you won't need us. You see if that chap should attempt to make himself annoying, and you had to hand him one, as you expressed it, your sister might need somebody near her while you were doing it."

"All right," replied Patsy. "That is very kind of you. I don't think I shall need any assistance, however. There will be an automobile awaiting us in front of the Grand Union. But you can come along if you like. However, if I get a chance at that man Watson, I don't want any interference. Mind that!"

"He is considerably bigger than you are, Garvan."

"Is he? Maybe so. If anything should happen, you take my sister to the automobile in front of the hotel. It's a red one—a Peerless—and the side-door will be open."

When they stepped from the car to the platform Watson was nowhere in sight, but when they reached the gate Patsy saw him just beyond it, talking rapidly to a policeman who was shaking his head with emphasis—and Patsy grinned, for it so happened that he knew that policeman very well, and the officer knew him quite as well.

As they approached, the policeman turned, and he opened his mouth to say something, but Patsy gave one of his expressive winks, whereupon the officer closed his mouth like a trap, and then, turning to Watson, said angrily:

"G'wan with you! You Boston fly-cops are no good anyhow. That's a gintleman. I don't know what you are!"

In the meantime, Patsy, with Cozine on his arm, had passed them. The two college boys were some distance in the rear, and it was evident that Watson had not noticed them in his eagerness. But instantly he trailed after Patsy and Cozine, keeping so close to them as almost to tread on their heels.

It will be remembered that he had overheard a part at least of Patsy's conversation over the telephone from

Coogan's office, and, therefore, was aware that an automobile would be in waiting somewhere.

The way happened to be clear across Forty-second Street at the time, and Patsy and Cozine stepped briskly out, still with Watson close upon their heels and the two college boys ten feet farther in the rear. Whether Watson suspected their presence or not, is not known. It is not likely that he did.

The brilliant lights of the street and from the hotels made it almost as bright as day, and as soon as they reached the opposite corner Patsy could see the automobile in waiting just beyond the second door of the Grand Union—in exactly the spot where Nick had said it would be.

A second glance told Patsy that Chick was seated under the wheel, ready to start at an instant's notice, and that Nick Carter himself was standing on the curb beside the machine.

"Cozine," he half-whispered, "that is our machine, there. The red one. That's Nick Carter, standing beside it. You're safe now, mavourneen. But that spalpeen is right behind us, almost treading on our heels. When we get to the machine, you jump inside without a word, and—and then wait for me."

A moment later and they were exactly abreast of the motor, and Patsy, with a gentle push, urged his companion toward the open door of the tonneau.

"Now, Cozine!" he whispered; and then, without waiting to observe whether she obeyed him or not, he wheeled like lightning and the next instant Watson was half-lifted from his feet and sent staggering backward by a blow from the young detective's fist.

And before he had time to recover, Patsy had followed that up and sent a second blow crashing into his face; and a third; and a fourth; and then as the man was falling, Patsy seized him by the throat with his left hand while with his right he struck him three times more—and stopped him.

"That's unwilling to remember me by," he said coolly enough. "That's part of the brain-storm you gave me, you scoundrel, and it's only a left-over squall at that!"

Chick had started forward when he saw what Patsy was doing, but he speedily saw that his assistance was not needed, and he knew that Nick would not have given certain orders had he not wished to aid him.

"Inside with you, Patsy! Two cops are coming, and we don't care to answer questions just now. Get inside!"

"Here are two friends who are going with us," said Patsy. And then to Hall and Harrington he added:

"Jump in! There's room for four in the tonneau—plenty;" and he almost shoved them into the car.

The door slammed, Chick turned on the power, and the next moment they were gliding down—it is up just at that spot—Fourth Avenue at a rapid rate, leaving the pummeled Watson to pick himself up as best he could.

And then Patsy leaned forward over the back of the seat and whispered in Nick Carter's ear:

"These are two Harvard students who befriended us on the train—Hall and Harrington by name. I was afraid they might have trouble with the officers if we left them behind in front of the hotel, so I asked them to come along. We can drop them anywhere, I suppose, although after what they've done, it would be nice to take them somewhere."

"What are their names?" asked Nick, also in a whisper. "Their full names, Patsy, if you know them."

"Monkton Hall, and Huxley Harrington."

"Patsy, you're a corker! You certainly are! You have brought the whole game home with you. I'll take them right along home with us."

"Maybe they wouldn't like that; and after what they have done——"

"Ask them if they will do me the honor to ride home with me, and tell them that after that I will take them wherever they want to go. Ask them and make them say yes, if you can."

"You're in no hurry are you?" asked Patsy, of the young men. "Mr. Carter would like to have you ride home with us—it isn't far—and after that he'll take you or send you wherever you wish to go?"

"Who did you say?" asked Hall quickly. "Who is the man in front of me?"

"Mr. Carter."

"What Mr. Carter?"

"Mr. Nicholas Carter—Nick Carter, if you like that better."

"Glory hallelujah! He is the very man I want to see of all others."

"Then it's all right," remarked Patsy complacently. "Save us some about it now, if you please. We'll soon be there." Then he turned to Cozine, who was huddled closely in one corner. "How is my little girl now?" he asked in a half-whisper.

"Oh, Patsy! What would I have done without you

and all these good friends?" she murmured, in reply. "When I think of all that might have happened, of all that I have passed through, and escaped, it appalls me."

"Well, then, forget it! That's easier."

"Did you hurt your hand, Patsy?" she asked slyly.

"Hurt me hand? Where? *Oh!* Not a bit of it. I wonder if I hurt his face any."

"I never saw anything so beautifully done in my life," she whispered.

"Did you like it? Faith, you're a girl after me own heart. You're the kind of sister I've always wished I had. Sure, I think if you had muscle enough you'd have done it yourself."

"I certainly would."

Patsy grinned. "Well, console yourself," he said. "I gave him the last three and the tiger for you. Here we are, Cozine."

"Am I to go inside?"

"Go inside is it? Where else would you go. There's a nice, comfortable old housekeeper here to take care of you and put you to bed and cuddle you and mother you till you'll wish you could have her always—and you haven't had much care of that sort of late. There, dry your eyes, and forget all your troubles, for they're over now as sure as I'm your long lost brother, Pat."

He helped her out of the car and with her followed Nick and the others up the steps. Joseph held the door open for them to enter; and then Patsy, addressing his chief, said:

"Sweet Cozine wishes to retire at once, if you don't mind. I will take her to Mrs. Peters right away;" and two minutes later Cozine was placed in the motherly care of Nick Carter's housekeeper, and no young woman, worn with worry and fatigue, was ever more tenderly cared for than was Cozine Marincroft that night.

Coogan was in the library with the others when Patsy returned to them, and Monkton Hall was standing upright and strong in the middle of the room, relating something to the detective.

"It is this way," he was saying, and it was at once evident that he was referring to Lucile Maynard. "During my freshman and sophomore years I am ashamed to say that I used to go often to her place. I was young. I liked to gamble. The fascination is in me, and I was as easy victim to her wiles and to the glamour of her face with its thousand lights and its velvet carpet and the general air of mystery that hung about it. Harrington almost always went with me. I would be ashamed to tell you how much money I have lost in that place."

"There is no need that you should tell me," said Nick.

"Well, I swore off all that sort of thing a year ago, and swore it off forever, too."

"Stick to that, my boy."

"I mean to stick to it. But I did many things that I ought not to have done, and it seemed as if that devil of a woman knew everything that I did. She has blackmailed me persistently ever since. Not by demanding money, but by asking this favor and that. I have a cottage at Bayshore; last season she asked for that—and I let her have it. I have a small country place back of Larchmont, and this letter which I have just shown to you, tells me that she has gone there without my permission and demanded—well, claimed everything in sight. She even defies me to dare to oust her or betray her, as you see, threatening all sorts of reprisals against me in the way of scandals, if I so much as dare to offer any objection. But, Mr. Carter, I am not going to shield a murderess like her, or protect a fugitive from justice at the risk of my own liberty, and more, my sense of honor. Not to spare myself all the scandal in the world. That is why I have come to you. That is why I asked Harrington to come to New York with me to find you, and to get your advice and assistance. That is what I have come here to do; to show you this letter and to put myself absolutely in your hands. It seems almost Providential that it should have been your assistant and his sister whom I befriended on the train coming over—still more so that I should be thrust directly into your motor and brought here to your house. And now, sir, you have my story. If that letter, written by Lucile Maynard to me at Harvard, is true, she is at this moment in my shooting-box, as I call that house, four miles back of Larchmont."

The detective shook his head.

"I don't think she is there," he said. "It is too far from her field of operations."

"Then why on earth did she write that letter?"

"I think when she wrote it she might have intended to go there. It is possible that she may have gone there—may be there now. You have a city home, Mr. Hall? I know you have, for I have written it inside—only to be told that you were at Harvard."

"You have been there to-day? Why?" asked the young man, surprised.

"Because I had selected you as one of her possible victims. I understood that you had left Harvard. I thought if you were in New York, you might be protecting her. As I understand your case, Mr. Hall, you are all alone in the world and are engaged to marry a very charming girl. This Maynard woman would threaten to give information to her that would break off the match. In that way she would have you, or think she had, in her power. And now to return to my other question: You have a city home, Mr. Hall—but tell me, haven't you more than one? Isn't there a cozy little house on Washington Heights that stands in your name?"

Hall turned fiery red, then paled; and then replied doggedly:

"Yes. There is, Mr. Carter."

CHAPTER XI.

NICK CARTER TAKES COMMAND.

"I don't wish to pry into any of your secrets, Mr. Hall," said Nick Carter, "but I would like you to tell me where that house is located, and if it is now occupied. I have not been able to find it or I should have gone there without your permission. I only know that it is somewhere above One Hundred and Sixtieth Street."

"I will take you to it, Mr. Carter. The house was formerly occupied by—by a friend of mine. It is closed now. I locked it myself and have kept the key with me ever since, and it is more than a year now. It was at the time when I resolved to be a man instead of a fool."

"Did Lucile Maynard ever know about the existence of that little house?"

"I am afraid she did."

"Do you know that she did?"

"Yes. I know that she did."

"And did she not also know that it is idle?"

"I did not tell her, but—I presume that she has been told."

"Exactly. Then that is where she is in hiding. The letter about your place at Larchmont was merely a blind—to cloak this other matter all you were an adventurer. It is not a good thing for a young man like you to be left absolute master of a great property, as you were, Mr. Hall."

"I know that only too well. But I have pulled myself together in time, I hope. I am to marry a lovely girl, and I mean to be worthy of her. When that is said, all is said."

"Quite true. See that you do it. Allow me to say that instead of locking up that house and leaving it, you should have stripped it and leased it to somebody, or have at least given some deserving person the use of it. I am afraid if we arrest Lucile there, in that house, your name may be brought unpleasantly into prominence."

"I don't care a rap! I came here with Harrington, to see this thing through—and John Coogan who sits there, knows me well enough to tell you that when I say a thing I generally mean it. I'll see it through, Mr. Carter, no matter what the consequences may be."

The detective pondered a moment. Then he said:

"It is possible that the thing may be accomplished quietly. We will try it, anyhow."

"I am entirely at your service, Mr. Carter, in any way you see fit to use me."

"Thank you. And you, Mr. Harrington? I might as well tell you that we have looked you up to-day, also."

"I don't blame you in the least. Yes, I am at your service to the end of the game."

"Thank you, also. Patsy, are you tired."

"No, chief! I am too glad to be tired!"

"Glad? How is that?"

"It is a long story, but I would like all of you to hear it."

Nick looked at his watch.

"It is a quarter past eleven," he said. "At half-past twelve we will leave here for Washington Heights, so you may have an hour and a quarter to tell your story. Patsy, do you realize what you have done to-day?"

"Yes, sir. I have been to Boston and back."

"To Boston and back! Is that the way you explain it. My lad, you have done as grand a day's work as was ever done in the world. I want these gentlemen to know it. But I do not know yet what you have to tell us about the young lady, or why you pummeled the life almost out of that poor chap in front of the hotel. Who was he?"

"Watson. The Boston detective. Wait now, chief. That is part of my story."

Patsy then began at the beginning and he told in detail every incident of that eventful day from the moment he stepped off the train in Boston, forty minutes late, to the moment of the scene in front of the Grand Union. He omitted nothing, save that he was rather too modest concerning the part he had played all through.

"Everybody I ran into in Boston seemed to wear the name of Pat," he said once. "The policeman at the depot was Pat all right; it was written on his face, and in his heart, too, I think; but when I struck the lad whose name was all the same as my own, sure I was fixed entirely. A likely lad he was, too. I'm going to write to him.

"But think for a moment, all of you, of the horror that has surrounded that poor girl who is up-stairs asleep now; bless her! Think of the horror she has been through, and it never once touched her. Think of the brink she has been standing upon, with that fiend of a woman ready and only too willing to push her over at any minute. Isn't it awful?

"Think of that brother of hers, who, if he was not exactly murdered by Lucile Maynard, was killed because of her. Think of that poor lad, lying there helpless, although conscious, in that house in Summerville, with his only sister hanging over him, and all the time that terrible woman in the house waiting for him to die so that the sister would fall into her hands.

"And think of his horror, unable to move or to speak; unable to say or do a thing to protect and to save his sister who stood in such awful peril.

"Think how his eyes beseechingly followed that moral leper around the room, trying to compel her by sheer force of will to spare his sister.

"Is it any wonder that Cozine mistook those glances for love. He was pleading with that woman with his eyes for his sister's honor and life; is it any wonder that the sister thought that his expression was the expression of love? It was the expression of love—love for the sister who sat beside him.

"And then think of the cold, calculating, devilish ingenuity of that woman!

"All that time, mind you, she was planning the murder of Merrill Gwynn—the crime for which she was imprisoned. And all the while she was also planning how Cozine should persecute her and so set her free. Did you ever hear of such ingenuity."

"And so, after all," exclaimed Hall, when Patsy ceased, "the young lady is not your sister, Mr. Garvan?"

"Yes, she is my sister. I've adopted her, by golly!"

There was a general smile at this; but Monkton Hall asked quickly:

"Was not that her brother who was injured and died, also, at Harvard four years ago? I was a sophomore then—I am taking a post-graduate course now—perhaps if you will tell me the name, I would know who he was."

"His name was Mortimer Marincroft."

"What!"

Both the college men started to their feet and then sank down again, looking at each other speechlessly; but it was Hall who, with his peculiar drawl, at last offered the explanation.

"Mort Marincroft was one of our best friends," he said, "and one of the best fellows who ever lived; and, Mr. Carter, the last time I ever saw him, was in the gambling-house run by Lucile Maynard. Shall I tell you about it?"

"Yes, please."

"We were rather bad boys then, all of us; reckless, at least. We had both been playing rather high that night and when I had lost all I had with me and more, too, and wanted to leave, Mort wouldn't come with me; so I left him there. I never saw him after that."

"What!" began Nick. "Do you mean that——"

"Wait a moment, please, Mr. Carter. When he didn't show up the next day at all, I waited until evening and then went in search of him, taking Harrington with me. When we asked Lucile Maynard where he was, she told us that he left the house about an hour after I did, and told her that he was going home to Philadelphia; and she added that he had said that he would write to me from there. He wanted to go home and rest up, she said.

"Well, we thought no more about it for a few days, and then I did get a letter—a typewritten one, only it had his signature all right, or at least I thought it was at the time. The letter said that he was writing to the faculty, and resigning from the university, and that he was going abroad at once to be gone indefinitely; said that he would write again from the other side; but he never did. And all the time I was asking the woman about him, he must have been lying somewhere in that very house, wounded unto death—*and to think that I could not have guessed it!*

"And that beautiful girl is his sister, Cozine, Mr. Garvan? Thank Heaven, I was enabled to protect her from that scoundrel! And that was Mort Marincroft's fate! Look here, Mr. Carter, you can blazon my name all over the world if you want to, if it will enable you to give that terrible woman her deserts. I don't care what comes of it! Yes even if I lose—if I lose my—my——"

"There, Mr. Hall, I think that will be about all just now. We'll take care of what is to come all right, and without putting you to much inconvenience either. But I quite appreciate your sentiments. I am sure that Mr. Harrington feels the same."

"I certainly do, sir."

"The trouble with all three of you young men was that you were left without proper guidance. You all lost your parents at about the same time. You all inherited money which unfortunately you had the use of. Young Marincroft lost his life, but you two have saved yourselves, and I hope that the revelations of this night will always be a warning to you that you cannot play with fire without being scorched—and sometimes destroyed. Mr. Hall, can you handle an automobile?"

"Like a top, sir."

"Then you shall sit under the wheel and run us to that Washington Heights house of yours. Have you the key with you?"

"No; but if you have an axe handy, it will do as well."

"I have something that I guess them an axe—something which no doubt has ye been able to duty;" and he exhibited his little pickback for an instant.

"I will ride on the front seat with you, Hall?" he continued. "Harrington and Cogan and Chick and Patsy will ride in the tonneau—and we will start now."

"Are you so sure that you will find the woman there, Mr. Carter?" asked Hall.

"I feel quite certain of it."

"You propose to break into the house in the middle of the night, like burglars?"

"Something like that—yes. But if Lucile Maynard is true to her career, we will find many people there, the interior of the house in a blaze of light, and plenty of guests going."

"Do you think so, when she is in hiding?"

"My dear fellow, the safest place in the world to hide is half in the open—and she knows that, doubtless. Besides, she came to New York with a definite purpose. She came here to kill me, in revenge for tracing that murder to her, and, therefore, she will have brought with her many of her loyal followers—her companions in crime upon whom she will rely to assist her. It may be that we will find them plotting and planning for my coming;" and he smiled grimly. "Now, I suppose the machine is at the front door?"

"I left it there. I have the spark-plug here with me."

"Well, then, if you are ready, my lads, we will start."

"Shall we need weapons, Mr. Carter?" asked Hall. "I haven't any but these;" and he held out two brawny arms toward the detective.

"They look as if they would serve well enough in most cases; but to-night I think it as well to be prepared for emergencies. Patsy, will you get some guns for the gentlemen?"

But when Patsy had left the room he said sternly:

"Understand me, please, both of you, the weapons are only for extreme emergency. They must not be used—not even shown, unless it becomes absolutely necessary; and I don't think the occasion will arise."

"We understand, Mr. Carter. I am much more handy with my fists than with anything else, and I'm tolerable strong in my arms."

"I don't doubt it. Here is Patsy."

In the hallway he said to Joseph:

"Joseph, you are to remain here at the door on guard until our return. Ten-Ichi should return at any moment now. Ask him to remain up for us, also."

CHAPTER XII.

THE MIDNIGHT FIGHT.

When the automobile approached the vicinity of the house they sought, Nick told Hall to bring the machine to a stop some distance away from it, so that the noise of it would not announce their approach.

When they did descend from it and walk down the street toward the house, Nick saw that it stood alone within a large yard, and was one of the left-over square frame houses of that neighborhood, of a time when buildings there were few and far between.

Now, there were other houses close around it, and opposite it, and the street was paved and lighted.

The structure itself stood a little back from the street, and outwardly at least, was dark and deserted.

"It looks as if we were going to have our trouble for our pains," said Hall to the detective, as they passed in through the gate; but the detective's only reply was:

"*Hush!*"

The entrance door was in the center of the building, from a veranda, and the six men silently mounted the steps with Nick Carter in the lead.

With the utmost delicacy of touch the detective turned

his picklock to the door, and after a moment he pushed it as silently open before him and they all passed inside—to utter darkness, for Nick softly closed the door after them.

And then they stood there for a moment, listening; and they had not long to wait.

A shout of laughter—the noise of men laughing boisterously—came to them from somewhere toward the rear of the building, and Nick leaned over and whispered in Hall's ear:

"Can you tell what room that came from?"

"Yes," was the whispered reply. "This hallway ends upon a library. Beyond that is an extension, which is the dining-room. It is a very large room, and that is where the people are now."

"Good!" said Nick; and he flashed his light so they could see their way. There appeared to be no danger that anyone would discover their approach.

They passed through the library, where the dust of a year had collected, and paused before the door which opened upon the dining-room that Hall had described.

And now they could not only hear voices, but they could also hear much of what was being said; this was, of course, mingled with the rattle of chips and with the exclamations that are in general use by card-players.

"They are playing poker," whispered Nick to Chick. "I should judge that there are two games going; or possibly three."

"Wait a minute," said Chick; and he bent forward and listened for a moment with his ear against the door.

"There are three games in operation," he said, returning, "and as nearly as I can make out, there are fourteen or fifteen persons present in there. I think, too, that they are all men."

"Let me listen," said the detective, and he took Chick's place at the door.

He spent some time there, listening carefully, and when he straightened up, he said:

"There are as you said, fourteen or fifteen men, and one woman—Lucile Maynard. If I figure it out right, some of them are Lucile's regular followers, and others—perhaps several of them—are strangers who have been roped into the game, or men who have come by invitation. I don't think we will have much difficulty. Chick?"

"Yes."

"I was going to leave Lucile to you. I devote your entire energy to her capture, without regard to anything else."

"Very good."

"Pass the word along to the others—that they are to pay no attention to Lucile whatever, but are merely to follow my lead. If there is fighting to be done, they have got to fight, but weapons must not be used or shown unless it is absolutely necessary."

The word was passed along, and when all was in readiness Nick placed his hand upon the knob of the door and turned it slowly.

The door was not locked and it opened readily enough—and strangely enough without any noise whatever, so that it swung entirely open without the knowledge of any person inside the room.

But then Lucile, who was seated with her back to the door, and who wore a low-necked dress, exclaimed suddenly that she felt a draft.

She started to rise to her feet, but in that brief interval Chick had glided swiftly forward, and just as she started up he seized her in his arms, and lifting her clear of the chair in which she was seated, leaped backward with her directly through the open door by which he had entered.

For in the meantime, silently and swiftly, the others had passed into the room.

The instant that Lucile felt herself seized, she uttered a piercing scream, and her companions until then absorbed in their game, leaped to their feet, overturning the tables with their loads of cards and chips, and for an instant there was the utmost confusion.

Outside the door, where Chick was binding Lucile so that she could not escape, and so that she could not use a weapon, she continued to utter scream after scream, for it had all been done so quickly that she was thoroughly frightened, and did not know what had happened.

But now the gamblers recovered their wits. There were many of them—fourteen in all, and they saw before them only five men. It looked easy.

The foremost of the gamblers was a burly ruffian whom Nick remembered to have seen in Lucile's place in Boston; and he started forward with a yell.

"Come on, boys!" he cried. "We can down them without half-try——"

He got no farther than that, for Nick Carter's fist caught him on the point of the chin at that instant and he went into the air as if shot by a spring gun; and he laid where he fell, too; and Nick passed on over him fighting

with his fists and felling each man who appeared before him.

And in the meantime the two football players were accomplishing great work.

Their giant-like arms were doing tackles such as they had never done before, and whoever came within reach of them went down like grass before a scythe.

Over near the door Patsy had already broken the arms of two men by the use of ju-jutsu, and taken altogether it was about as pretty a knock-down-and-drag-out mess as one could wish to see; for never once did one of the attacking party fall, although it must be admitted that some ugly blows were received.

Strange to say, not a weapon appeared in sight during the whole fight.

If any of the gamblers were armed, the surprise had been so sudden that they forgot it; and within five minutes of the time when Chick seized Lucile and carried her out of the room, the five who remained were victors over the fourteen, and had them crowded and cowering in a corner, begging for mercy.

It is true that not all of the fourteen made any attempt to fight.

It was plain that at least five of them were very sorry that they were there, and wished themselves well out of it, and so in reality our five friends only had nine to fight against.

But that was odds of almost two to one.

Nevertheless the fight was over.

Nick Monkton, the giant he had knocked down in the beginning, and two others of the men who were there, both of whom were criminals known to him. To the others he said:

"You fellows are not wanted. If you keep to that corner where you are and mind your own business until we are through here, you can go when you please. I don't know but I will let you go now, on second thought. Patsy."

"Yes, sir."

"Take the mask-play from Mr. Hall and bring the cowardly cur to the door. Then stay with it till we come out. Now, you fellows scatter! Skedaddle!"

You may be sure that they lost no time in obeying; and when they were well out of the house, Nick removed the handcuffs from two of the players, keeping only the giant, for he suspected that he might want him. The others he told to go, and they went.

Then the detective called to Chick.

"Bring Lucile in here where it is light," he said; and when she was brought before him he said to her:

"Well, Lucile, did you think you could escape me for long?"

She did not reply. She tried to look as if she did not hear.

"Do you know this gentleman?" he asked, indicating Hall.

"Certainly," she replied calmly.

"Do you remember his friend, Mortimer Marincroft?"

She started as if she had received a blow, and she turned deathly white, so that Nick believed that she would faint away; but she did not.

"You murdered him; therefore, you should remember him," continued the detective mercilessly.

"I did not," she returned calmly, for she had now recovered herself. "There is the man who broke Mort Croft's back," and she pointed to the scowling giant on the floor. "I'll testify against him if you wish me to. The game is up for me now. I see that."

"You would have ruined the life of Cozine, too," continued Nick.

"I meant to give her all my fortune. I never meant that harm should befall her, more than to serve a short time in prison for me; but she would have been well paid for it."

"Nothing could repay a young woman for such a thing as that, Lucile. But we need not talk. Will you return to Boston quietly, or do you demand extradition papers?"

"Oh, I'll go back on the first train, if you will take me."

"I'll take you, all right. Carry her to the motor, Chick. Hall and I will put out the lights and lock up. Coogan, will you help Chick, please. Hall, you had better have this house stripped, and then sell it. I think there will be no publicity now."

"Mr. Carter, how can I ever thank you?" exclaimed Hall.

"I'll tell you that, Monkton. You can thank me by keeping forever those good resolutions you have made."

THE END.

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